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AD HOC GROUP OF EXPERTS ON THE CHEMICAL INDUSTRY

Second session, 28-30 April 1999
(Item 5(b) on the provisional agenda)

COMPARATIVE DATA BANK ON CHEMICAL LEGISLATION IN THE COUNTRIES OF THE ECE REGION (CHEMLEX)

Note by the secretariat

Introduction

1. The purpose of this Note is to describe the present status of the Comparative Data Bank on Chemical Legislation in the Countries of the ECE Region, for the attention of the Ad hoc Group of Experts on the Chemical Industry at its second session, to be held from 28-30 April 1999.

Background

2. The *Comparative Study on Chemical Legislation in Countries of the ECE Region*, mandated by the former Working Party on the Chemical Industry (ECE/CHEM/116, paras. 21-25) and the First ad hoc Group of Experts on the Chemical Industry (TRADE/CHEM/GE.1/1998/6, paras. 9-10) has been converted to an electronic database system and published as a United Nations publication in CD-ROM form. Copies of the CD-ROM have been distributed free of charge to all delegations of the ad hoc Group of Experts on the Chemical Industry. A selling price of US\$ 250 was established by the Sales and Marketing Division in collaboration with ECE.

3. Software for the CD-ROM was developed by a specialized firm in the Netherlands, and the rather substantial cost was largely covered by the United Nations Publications budget. A token contribution was made by ECE. Printing and packaging of the CD-ROM were done in France.

4. The CD-ROM contains legislation from 25 countries plus directives from the European Union. The countries included cover the range of ECE sub-regions: North America, Western Europe, Central and Eastern Europe. There are over 600 texts on the CD-ROM. It also contains cross-referencing between countries, keyword indexing and classifications.

5. The CD-ROM is being used by a wide variety of end users, as indicated by the profile of customers: national legislators, legal firms, libraries, trading firms, shippers, etc.

Recent Developments

6. A second edition of the CD-ROM is essential if the project is to maintain its value. It should update the legislation already included, as well as introducing data from additional countries. It would be most desirable to produce the next edition by the end of 1999 or early 2000.

7. In order to complete the task, the services of a consultant will be necessary. The secretariat has contacted the consultant who created the original database; he could be available and the work could be carried out, including any necessary corrections to the previous data, within six to nine months. This would require:

Input from the ECE secretariat:

- redesign of the questionnaire;
- up-dating the contact list of focal points;
- printing and distribution of the questionnaire;
- collection and collation of responses, and follow-up for those countries which do not reply.

Input from the consultant:

- data analysis and entry from national questionnaires supplied through the secretariat;
- building cross-references.

Input from United Nations Publications Service:

- production and sale of a second edition (the Publications Service has already expressed positive interest).

Input from delegations:

- confirm that the former focal points are still available, or nominate a new specialist to be responsible for providing information required in the questionnaire;
- ensure that questionnaire is completed.

Russian language edition

8. A Russian language edition of the CHEMLEX CD-ROM has been requested by several delegations, and through enquiries received by the secretariat. The United Nations Documentation Service is willing to translate the software for the CD-ROM (some 60 pages) into Russian, so that searching and manipulating text in Russian would be possible. Future texts submitted in English or French for the second edition would be translated by the United Nations; translation of the earlier texts would have to be provided by one or more of the delegations. It was felt that the Russian edition should be made part of the second edition, and indeed both English/French and Russian would be on the same CD-ROM.

9. Thus a Russian edition will be possible, but the costs of translation of the legal texts must be covered by one or more delegations.

Future work

10. In order to produce the second edition of CHEMLEX the consultancy fee and a portion of the production costs will have to be met by a contribution from one or more delegations. The contribution needed is US\$40,000. It should be noted that the initial project was funded by a grant from the European Community (ECU 120,000 plus additional contributions made later toward production costs). ECE will contribute secretariat resources. The second edition will also include all data from the first edition, with updating and corrections where needed, plus (very possibly) a fully usable Russian language version.
