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**COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE TRANSPORT OF
DANGEROUS GOODS AND ON THE GLOBALLY
HARMONIZED SYSTEM OF CLASSIFICATION
AND LABELLING OF CHEMICALS**

**Sub-Committee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized
System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals**

**(First session, 9-11 July 2001,
agenda item 7)**

IMPLEMENTATION

**Implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling
of Chemicals (GHS) in developing countries and countries in transition**

Transmitted by the expert from Germany

Background

1. One of the tasks of the Sub-Committee is to promote the implementation of the GHS in developing countries and countries in transition.
2. It is important for countries to understand the contents of the GHS and how a national classification, labelling and hazard communication system based on the GHS can be integrated into, or the basis for, a national chemicals management system (contents: what shall it deliver, procedure: how can it be implemented).
3. A clear and transparent final GHS document will enable countries who did not participate in the development of the GHS to apply it in practice and will reduce the necessity to develop technical guidance. To further help understanding and interpretation of the GHS a guidance document is in preparation.
4. It must be clear from the GHS documentation:
 - (a) what are the obligatory core requirements;
 - (b) what are the optional additional components;
 - (c) how the components are related to each other;
 - (d) and how the system could function in practice.

5. In addition to the GHS documentation referred to above further assistance for countries is needed to enable them to determine:

- (a) what resources and capacities are available to them for data generation (e.g. testing facilities) and/or for access to information;
- (b) what role a national classification, labelling and hazard communication system should play taking into account national legislative, economic and capacity constraints;
- (c) in which areas (transport, work place, consumer) which elements of the GHS could be applied;
- (d) how can the GHS or the components that have been determined to be relevant for a country be implemented.

6. Mainly the last aspect is addressed by an activity planned by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the International Labour Office (ILO) for developing national action plans for implementing the GHS.

7. This important activity should be complemented by another capacity building effort that aims at enabling countries to determine the role of a national classification, labelling and hazard communication system within their chemicals management system. For this purpose relevant information and an appropriate decision making tool should be made available.

8. Such a tool could be developed within the scope of the UNITAR/UNEP project "Chemicals Management Instruments: A Series of Resource Documents for Countries Making choices". Detailed information on the Series can be found in annex 1. Two documents are at present available from <http://www.chem.unep.ch/irptc/Publications/pb0901.html#infex>:

- (a) one on Chemical Inventories ; and
- (b) one on New Chemical Notification Systems.

The documents were developed by the co-operation of interested countries who described their national implementation of the chosen chemicals management instrument according to the given outline (annex 1) as part 2 of a document. In a workshop the general concepts for the selected chemicals management instrument used by the countries were identified and described in part 1. In a second regional/subregional workshop the document was presented and discussed and questions and answers of frequently asked questions by the participants were added to the document. These are living documents where other countries experience and additional questions and answers based on their national implementation of the instrument can be added.

9. A similar approach is proposed for the implementation of the GHS:

- the part 1 of the document on GHS will easily be available based on existing GHS documentation (eg final GHS document, guidance);
- Countries or the European Union are invited to describe their implementation of the GHS and the expected changes necessary to implement the GHS as part 2 of the document.

10. This document on GHS implementation could be presented to interested countries in regional/subregional workshops and updated with the countries feed back. Additionally countries could be assisted in applying the document when implementing their national classification, labelling and hazard communication system.

Proposed action

11. Germany is interested and willing to work in such a project co-ordinated by UNITAR/ UNEP in co-operation with ILO and to give financial assistance. Other countries are also invited to contribute to the project by written contributions and financing/co-financing workshops and related capacity building activities.

Annex

Chemicals Management Instruments: A Series of Resource Documents for Countries Making Choices (Excerpt from the introduction to the documents of the UNEP/UNITAR Series)

About the Series ...

This document is part of a series which provides countries with basic and practical information on various chemicals management instruments. The purpose of the series is not to prescribe nor advocate the use of specific chemicals Instruments. Rather, the aim is to provide factual and practical information to assist countries in making well-informed choices about whether a specific instrument or approach would meet their needs and priorities and if so, how they might wish to go about implementing the instrument, drawing upon the approaches taken and real-life experiences gained by other countries.

In making use of the modules, countries are encouraged to consider questions such as:

- Would the instrument address an area of priority national/local interest or concern?
- Would the instrument fit well with other existing or planned aspects of the national chemicals management scheme?
- Could the instrument be feasibly implemented taking into consideration institutional and human capacities and existing infrastructures?
- Are there alternative instruments/measures that would achieve similar results but which would require less time and/or fewer resources?

Given the experiences that other countries have had, how might this instrument be implemented in order to best meet national needs and circumstances?

The development of the series is being co-ordinated by UNEP Chemicals and UNITAR, with individual modules being prepared by interested governments and organisations, either individually or in small teams. A Technical Advisory Group has been formed to provide guidance and input on the overall development of the series and to review the draft modules prior to their publication. The development of the series is considered to be an ongoing process, with additional modules being prepared taking into account those topics which have emerged as of priority interest to countries which are in the process of strengthening their national chemicals management schemes. Organisations and governments which may be interested in contributing to the further development of the series are encouraged to contact UNEP Chemicals and/or UNITAR.

FOREWORD

The policy instruments which a country selects for national chemicals management can influence its ability to respond to concrete problems affecting its population and the quality of its environment. The selection of policy instruments also has practical and resource implications. Some instruments utilised as part of existing national chemicals management schemes are relatively sophisticated in terms of technical capacity and resource needs, while other approaches, though perhaps less comprehensive, may address priority concerns with fewer resources.

Much experience can be shared among countries about the merits of these various instruments, the resources needed and the issues and problems faced. Exploring and documenting experiences with these

different approaches as implemented at the country level could provide a useful basis for decision making by other countries interested in selecting chemicals management policy instruments to address their individual circumstances. This could be particularly useful for those countries which are in the early stages of developing their chemicals management schemes and/or those which are faced with very limited resources.

In light of the above, UNEP and UNITAR have initiated a project to co-ordinate the development of a series of documents which will provide practical information on a range of chemicals management policy instruments, including the experiences and perspectives of those countries which have developed and implemented such instruments. The series is intended for decision makers concerned with chemicals management at the national level, particularly in developing and industrialising countries, and aims to enable informed choices by providing useful and objective information based on practical experiences. The document series is not intended to be prescriptive, and thus will not try to rank the different approaches nor make recommendations.

The series of documents is expected to become an input to various capacity building programmes of international organisations and other actors involved in country-based chemicals management capacity building activities. Specifically, it is anticipated that part of the document series will be linked to the UNITAR/10MC *Pilot Programme to Assist Countries in Implementing National Action Programmes for Integrated Chemicals Management*, in which Argentina, Ghana, Indonesia and Slovenia are participating.

Co-operation with Interested Partners

The experiences of individual countries and international organisations will be a key source of information for the instrument series, thus active and broad input will be crucial to the success of the project. UNEP-Chemicals and UNITAR are exploring with interested governments and organisations opportunities for a partnership approach for the development of specific modules. Through such partnerships, countries and/or organisations with a particular interest in one or several module topics would co-ordinate with UNEP-Chemicals and UNITAR in developing each module, including inviting input, through use of a questionnaire, from countries which have experience with the particular instrument. Input from developing and industrialising countries, including the four pilot countries participating in the UNITAR/10MC Pilot Capacity Building Programme, will also be important for ensuring that the document series is geared towards their priority needs.

Scope of the Project

The proposed series will cover a range of policy instruments used in the context of chemicals management and decision making, including regulatory and non-regulatory approaches.

Policy instruments considered for possible inclusion in the document series are, for example,

- inventories of existing chemicals
- Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers
- notification schemes for new chemicals
- registration schemes
- classification of chemicals
- packaging and labelling schemes
- product registers
- integrated pest management
- community/workers right-to-know programmes
- pollution prevention/cleaner production
- life cycle assessment

The project will result in a series of peer-reviewed modules on specific chemicals management instruments. The individual modules are planned to be developed through a decentralised, partnership approach involving interested countries, bilateral assistance agencies and international organisations. An introductory document to facilitate the use of the modules and to provide guidance to assist countries in selecting among chemicals management policy instruments is also being considered. Overall co-ordination for development of the series will be provided by UNEP and UNITAR.

Module Content

Each module will be comprised of two sections. The first section will provide generic information on the instrument, including a general description of the instrument, its purpose and objectives, the services it can provide and related benefits, problems it may not be able to address and other limitations, and resources required for its implementation. A second section will describe the practical experiences and perspectives of countries that have applied the instrument. For selected countries, summary information will be provided on the use of the instrument in the context of national chemicals management, the results, benefits and drawbacks of the instrument from the country perspective, any special design features or adaptations of the instrument as implemented by the country, and national contact points for more information.

A Technical Advisory Group of interested individuals from governments and other interested parties was established to guide the development of the resource series and to review draft Modules. This advisory group comprises chemicals management experts from developed and developing countries, international/regional organisations and non-governmental groups/associations, with UNEP Chemicals and UNITAR providing the secretariat.

The Technical Advisory Group is requested to review and provide input into the list of chemicals management instruments to be addressed in the series and will be involved in designing the standard module format and sample questionnaire to be used in compiling the various modules. Once draft modules have been prepared, the experts review them to ensure that the information is accurate, objectively presented and relevant to the needs of target groups.
