



**Governing Council
of the United Nations
Environment Programme**

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Items 5 (b), 6 and 9 of the provisional agenda*

Policy issues: chemicals management

**Follow-up to the World Summit on Sustainable Development:
contribution of the United Nations Environment Programme
to the forthcoming session of the Commission on Sustainable Development**

**Implementation of the programme of work of the
United Nations Environment Programme and the
relevant decisions of the Governing Council**

Chemicals management

Report of the Executive Director

Summary

In part II of its decision 23/9 of 25 February 2005, the Governing Council requested the Executive Director to report to the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum at its ninth special session on the outcomes of the process for developing a strategic approach to international chemicals management (SAICM), with a view to the Governing Council considering its endorsement on behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme. The present document provides a progress report on the SAICM development process up to September 2005. A further report will be submitted to the Governing Council following the conclusion of the International Conference on Chemicals Management to be held in Dubai from 4 to 6 February 2006.

At the third and most recent session of the Preparatory Committee for the Development of SAICM, held in Vienna from 19 to 24 September 2005, participants considered the three proposed elements of SAICM: a draft high-level declaration prepared by the President of the Preparatory Committee, an overarching policy strategy and a global plan of action. The participants at the session provisionally agreed that the Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) should be requested to perform secretariat functions for SAICM during its implementation phase. A number of outstanding issues remain to be resolved, and various elements of the SAICM documents remain to be finalized, including sections of the overarching

* UNEP/GCSS.IX/1.

policy strategy dealing with financial considerations and principles and approaches. The President of the Preparatory Committee will convene a meeting of an expanded bureau on 4 and 5 November 2005 to consider possible avenues for consensus and to make final preparations for the International Conference on Chemicals Management.

The Governing Council may wish to consider adopting a decision endorsing the completed SAICM, as well as the role and activities of UNEP in relation to the implementation of SAICM.

I. Introduction

1. In its decision SS.VII/3 of 15 February 2002, the Governing Council decided that there was a need further to develop a strategic approach to international chemicals management (SAICM) and endorsed the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety's Bahia Declaration and Priorities for Action beyond 2000 as the foundation of that approach. The decision set out consultation requirements and an analytical process involving a review of current and planned chemical safety activities, identification of gaps and the proposing of priorities and projects. The development of SAICM was endorsed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development in September 2002 and also by the United Nations World Summit in New York in September 2005. The SAICM development process is co-convened by UNEP, the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety and the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals.

2. In February 2003, the Governing Council agreed at its twenty-second session, in decision 22/4IV, to the concept of an open-ended consultative process involving representatives of all stakeholder groups as envisaged in decision SS.VII/3, taking the form of preparatory meetings followed by an international conference. Decision 22/4 IV also proposed that the international conference be held in conjunction with the ninth special session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum in early 2006 and called upon the Executive Director to strive to ensure that the process of further developing the strategic approach remained open, transparent and inclusive, providing all stakeholders with opportunities to participate in the substantive work. In February 2005, the Governing Council, at its twenty-third session, in part II of decision 23/9, requested the Executive Director as a matter of high priority to make appropriate provision for the implementation of the responsibilities of UNEP under the strategic approach, once adopted. It further requested the Executive Director to make provision for activities to support developing countries and countries with economies in transition in implementing SAICM, taking into account the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building.

II. The SAICM development process to September 2005

3. After initial planning work by an inter-organization steering committee¹ and an open-ended information meeting held in Geneva in April 2003, the first session of the Preparatory Committee for the Development of a Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 9 to 13 November 2003. The session was attended by 428 participants from 127 Governments, 19 intergovernmental organizations and approximately 50 non-governmental organizations drawn from a wide range of sectors including agriculture, environment, foreign affairs, health, industry, labour and science. Under the Presidency of Dr. Halldor Thorgeirsson of Iceland, the Preparatory Committee considered and further developed draft SAICM elements proposed by stakeholders and compiled by the secretariat. It adopted as the overall goal of SAICM the target set down in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development that, by 2020, chemicals be used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment. Also developed at the first session were rules of procedure designed to maximise participation in the development of SAICM by all stakeholders.

¹ The current members of the steering committee are the seven participating organizations of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the Global Environment Facility, the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety, the United Nations Development Programme, and the World Bank. IOMC comprises the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, UNEP, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the World Health Organization.

4. The second session of the Preparatory Committee, held in Nairobi from 4 to 8 October 2004, was again attended by approximately 400 participants, including representatives of 115 Governments, from a broad range of sectors. The Committee elected a new President, Ambassador Viveka Bohn of Sweden, and agreed upon a tripartite structure for the SAICM documents comprising a high-level declaration, an overarching policy strategy and a global plan of action. The President was mandated to prepare a draft of the declaration based on an outline agreed by the Committee and also to work with the secretariat to revise drafts of the overarching policy strategy and global plan of action that had been developed during the session. Other intersessional work agreed to by the Committee included studies on financial considerations and on principles and approaches, as well as papers relating to implementation of SAICM and taking stock of progress. During the first half of 2005, a process for submissions on the draft texts, regional consultations and a meeting of an expanded bureau facilitated the intersessional work.

5. The third session of the Preparatory Committee was held in Vienna from 19 to 24 September 2005. The meeting was attended by over 600 participants from 145 Governments and numerous intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The Committee considered the President's draft of the high-level declaration and reached provisional agreement on most sections of the overarching policy strategy and the detailed global plan of action, subject to final consideration by the International Conference on Chemicals Management. It was agreed that given the guidance status of the global plan of action, it need not be fully negotiated and would be subject to ongoing refinement in the future. The Committee provisionally agreed that the Executive Director of UNEP should be requested to perform secretariat functions to support the implementation of SAICM and that the Conference, which is expected to adopt SAICM in February 2006, should be reconvened to undertake periodic reviews of progress in the implementation of SAICM. It also agreed provisionally on the functions of both the future SAICM secretariat and the Conference when reconvened to exercise its proposed review role. While it was provisionally agreed that the Executive Director of UNEP should be requested to establish and assume overall responsibility for the secretariat, both UNEP and the World Health Organization would take "lead roles in the secretariat in their respective areas of responsibility." Not yet completed discussions on financial arrangements included a proposal that UNEP also administer a trust fund that would be part of a possible "Quick Start Programme" in support of initial capacity-building activities for the implementation of SAICM objectives.

III. The remainder of the SAICM development process

6. In order to take stock of the outcomes of the third session of the Preparatory Committee and explore possible avenues for consensus on the outstanding negotiating issues prior to the International Conference on Chemicals Management, the President will convene a meeting of an expanded bureau on 4 and 5 November 2005. The meeting will be attended by Government representatives from all regions, the three co-convening organizations for the SAICM development process and a small number of non-governmental participants.

7. The International Conference on Chemicals Management will be held in Dubai from 4 to 6 February 2006 and is expected to be a high-level and multi-sectoral gathering that will finalize and adopt SAICM and refer it to the governing bodies of relevant intergovernmental organizations for consideration. The first of those governing bodies to take up SAICM would be the UNEP Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, at its ninth special session. Actions which the Governing Council may wish to consider are discussed below.

IV. SAICM implementation

8. SAICM implementation is intended to take place within a 15-year timeframe corresponding with the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation's 2020 target for the sound management of chemicals. Building on the political commitments expressed in the SAICM high-level declaration and overarching policy strategy, and guided by the relevant elements of the global plan of action, SAICM stakeholders are expected to work towards the achievement of SAICM objectives, possibly beginning with an enabling phase involving the development of national and other action plans. Successful implementation will likely entail greater recognition of chemical safety as a cross-cutting sustainable development issue and the acceleration of capacity-building to assist developing and transition economy countries to achieve the sound management of chemicals. In the case of UNEP, an initial programme of activities to support SAICM implementation during the 2006-2007 biennium is under development in response to the Governing Council's request to the Executive Director in decision 23/9. A summary of

those proposed activities, currently being elaborated, will be included in the additional report on SAICM outcomes to be provided to the Governing Council in Dubai.

V. Possible action by the Governing Council

9. Immediately following the International Conference on Chemicals Management, which will have considered the adoption of SAICM, the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum will, at its ninth special session, be provided with a further report on the outcome of the SAICM development process and elements for a possible draft decision. The Governing Council in its decision 23/9, has previously expressed the intention of considering the outcomes of the SAICM development process, with a view to considering endorsement of SAICM on behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme. In the same decision, the Governing Council also requested the Executive Director to make provision for the fulfilment of UNEP responsibilities and for activities to support developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the implementation of SAICM. Thus a possible draft decision for consideration by the Governing Council at its ninth special session might include the following elements:

- (a) Endorsement, or some other appropriate recognition, on behalf of UNEP, of SAICM following its anticipated adoption by the International Conference on Chemicals Management on 6 February 2006;
 - (b) Agreement, if so requested, that UNEP would perform certain tasks to facilitate the overall implementation of SAICM, such as the provision of secretariat services and administration of a possible trust fund;
 - (c) Approval of the broad outline of proposed activities which UNEP would undertake in the 2006–2007 biennium to begin meeting its own responsibilities in the implementation of SAICM.
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