

ANNEX 10

Report of African Regional Group Meetings

Report of African Regional Group Meetings 12-18 October 2000

1. OPENING OF THE MEETING

The meeting was opened at 9 a.m. on Wednesday 12 October 2000 by Mr Ousmane TOURE, National Director of Sanitation and of Pollution and Hazards Control of Mali, Vice-President of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS).

Mr Toure recalled the aims of Forum III and the need to harmonize the points of view of the African Group for the meetings of the Forum, at which important decisions would be taken for the following five years.

The representative of the Government of Brazil welcomed the African participants. He emphasized the importance of the meeting for his country, which shared the same concerns about chemical management as the other developing countries. Finally, he expressed the hope that the participants stay in Salvador would both pleasant and useful.

After the official opening, all the participants present in the room were introduced.

2. BUREAU

The meeting elected the following members by consensus:

Chairman: Ousmane TOURE (Mali)

Rapporteurs: Dudley ACHU SAMA, Cameroon and Ibrahima SOW, Senegal.

The agenda for the meeting was adopted without amendment.

3. PARTICIPATION FROM THE AFRICAN REGION

(see annex 16, Final Report of Forum III)

Countries

South Africa, Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Comoros, Egypt, Ethiopia, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Malawi, Mali, Madagascar, Niger, Nigeria, Senegal, Togo, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

NGOs

International Union of Food, Agricultural and Allied Workers' Associations (IUFAW, Uganda Office), Voarisoa (Madagascar).

Observers

Hydrac company (Cameroon), OBEPAB (Benin).

4. GENERAL

The summary presentations by countries on chemical safety activities were followed by a preliminary discussion which yielded the following conclusions:

(i) Despite the progress made with implementing the programmes of action of Forum II (increasing the number of national focal points, development of plans of action for management of chemicals, identification of priorities), it has to be recognized that much remains to be done:

- Some African countries have not yet produced their national profile and do not possess adequate environmental legislation;
- The capacity (human, technical, material and communications) required for ecologically sound management of chemicals is still weak, if not non-existent. Neither is coordination between the different actors very operational.

(ii) Since its creation, IFCS has made tremendous progress by developing a strong partnership on chemical management with the chemical industry, Governments, trade unions and NGOs, etc. Nevertheless, there are still a number of black spots: the potential impact on the health of populations and on the safety of workers involved with the production, manipulation and handling of chemicals is still considerable.

(iii) The impact of chemical pollutants on the environment (water, air, soil, etc.) and on the health of the population is still poorly understood in Africa.

(iv) Prevention of the illegal traffic in toxic and dangerous chemicals requires special attention at this Forum, and should be one of the main priorities for action.

In the light of the foregoing, the African countries must give careful consideration to the mechanism to ensure them access to the funding required for the implementation of the priority programmes identified within the framework of Forum III. IFCS should act as a catalyst in this respect.

5. PARTICIPATION IN THE WORKING GROUPS

The group appointed the following delegates to represent it on the Election Facilitating Committee and on the working groups set up during Forum III:

- Guinea, for the election facilitating committee;
- Nigeria, for the Bahía Declaration;
- Zambia, for the illegal traffic in dangerous chemicals;
- Nigeria, for priorities for action for 2000 and beyond.

The African Group fully supports the resolutions adopted at these different meetings.

6. GENERAL RECOMMENDATIONS

At the conclusion of the debates, the African Group had identified recommendations, which were carried forward to the Working Groups and Plenary, relating to the following six programme areas:

- Activity A: Expanding and accelerating international assessment of chemical risks;
- Activity B: Harmonization of classification and labelling of chemicals;
- Activity C: Information exchange on toxic chemicals and chemical risks;
- Activity D: Establishment of risk-reduction programmes;
- Activity E: Strengthening of national capabilities and capacities for the sound management of chemicals;
- Activity F: Prevention of illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous products.

7. NOMINATION OF IFCS OFFICERS AND FORUM STANDING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

The Group nominated the following officers to represent Africa on the bureau and on the Standing Committee through Forum IV:

Vice-President: Senegal.

Members of the Standing Committee

1. Nigeria
2. Madagascar

Malawi and Angola were designated as alternates for Nigeria and Madagascar.