

**ANNEX 6**

**Priorities for Action beyond 2000**

## Priorities for Action beyond 2000

1. The Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS or Forum) is a non-institutional arrangement whereby representatives from governments and non-governmental and intergovernmental organizations consider and provide analysis and advice on the environmentally sound management and reduction of risks from chemicals. Where appropriate, IFCS makes recommendations to other organizations that have mandates to implement activities to improve the management of chemicals.
2. Recommendations for *Priorities for Action beyond 2000* follow. These recommendations deal with:
  - Priorities for Action by governments;
  - Work by which international bodies may develop effective tools for use by governments; and
  - Ways in which stakeholders may demonstrate their commitment to chemical safety.

The Forum actively supports cooperation between international organizations and governments, and the implementation of international agreements nationally. It also encourages cooperation between countries, particularly within regions and sub-regions of the world.

The Forum encourages international organizations participating in the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) to continue their efforts to enhance coordination of their activities aimed at strengthening capacities of developing countries and countries with economies in transition and in the framework of an explicit demand-driven process to these countries for strengthening and integrating their chemicals management.

3. The efficient coordination of chemical safety endeavours by all participatory and concerned sectors is a prerequisite for successful results at the national level. The active participation of employers and workers, the mobilization of the non-governmental sector, and the strengthening of community 'right to know', are important facets in increasing chemical safety. Manufacturers, importers, formulators and industrial users should have the main but differentiated responsibility for generating and assessing data, as well as providing adequate and reliable information to users, governments and the public on the safety and safe use of their products for that part of the life cycle to which they contribute. Public authorities are responsible for establishing the general framework for the risk assessment procedures and controls.

4. Sound management of chemicals depends on a variety of factors including research, training, information and communications, implementing control measures, capacity building, financial and technical assistance, and the transfer of technology to developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

It is recommended that additional educational programs and training courses be arranged at national and regional levels in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to provide a core of trained technical staff and policymakers. Specific efforts should be made to improve the coordination of activities in education, training and technical assistance.

5. Control of chemicals and pollution control initiatives should be closely integrated and the precautionary approach, as outlined in principle 15 of the Rio Declaration, should be applied<sup>1</sup>. The full range of risk reduction options should be considered, including encouraging, in particular, replacing more dangerous chemicals with less dangerous ones or using alternative processes.

6. To protect the health of workers, special attention should be paid to occupational health and safety concerns caused by chemicals. To protect the health of the general public, chemical safety issues regarding susceptible groups (e.g. persons of fertile age, pregnant women, fetuses, children, the sick and elderly) need to be clearly addressed in the assessment and management of risks.

Public interest non-governmental organizations have a valuable role as conduits of information, being well positioned to disseminate industry and government information to their communities and also to transfer the community concerns about toxic substances back to regulators and policy makers.

7. It is recognized that technical and financial assistance and technology transfer to developing countries and countries with economies in transition is important to accomplish the IFCS “Priorities for Action beyond 2000”.

Whilst recognizing that there are established mechanisms for bilateral and multilateral assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition, there is a strong need to strengthen and broaden these arrangements in order to achieve effective management of chemical safety. Technical and financial assistance should be provided in a non-discriminatory way.

8. The order in which the following recommendations are presented is not intended to suggest their degree of importance.

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<sup>1</sup>Some countries preferred the word “*considered*”, the majority of participants adopted the word “*applied*”.

## **Programme Area A:**

### **Expanding and accelerating international assessment of chemical risks**

1. Common principles for harmonized approaches for performing and reporting health and environmental risk assessments should be developed as soon as possible. Such principles must be internationally accepted, thus permitting the full use of risk assessments performed by international and national bodies.

**By 2004, the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS) and the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) participating organizations should have ensured that recommendations for common principles for harmonized approaches should be available for terminology, cancer, and reproductive and developmental toxicology. Common principles for the approach to other specific toxicological endpoints, such as immunotoxicology, endocrine disruption, and ecotoxicology, should be adopted wherever possible.**

2. Hazard evaluation (i.e. the first step of risk assessment) should be carried out in accordance with the requirements of harmonized health and environmental risk assessments, including internationally recommended methodology, ensuring transparency and openness. These evaluations should be undertaken with the support of the participating organizations of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC). New alternative test methods which enable the use of fewer laboratory animals should be developed, standardized and validated.

**Hazard evaluations should be carried out in accordance with internationally recommended methodologies and in an open and transparent manner. In addition to ongoing national, regional and international evaluation programmes, through the industry initiative an additional 1000 chemicals hazard assessments will be provided by 2004, and the resulting information will be made available to the public in a timely manner.**

The goal of risk assessment is to estimate the likelihood of an adverse effect on humans, other species and/or on ecological systems. This requires knowledge of exposure and of the susceptibility of species or systems likely to be impacted; this can vary from one region to another. Test methods and data have been largely developed that are most relevant to the more temperate climatic regions.

**The cooperation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition should be sought to ensure that all relevant data, including exposure data, required to assess human and environmental risks are developed and assessed.**

3. For all chemicals in commerce, appropriate data detailing the inherent hazards of those chemicals should be made available to the public. Highest priority should be given to hazard information for those chemicals that have greatest potential for substantial exposures.

To implement this principle, the Forum Standing Committee should develop a proposal for an additional *Priority for Action* to be discussed at Forum IV. This *Priority for Action* should address:

- The role of industry in generating and assessing data;
- The role of industry and governments in making available, and easily accessible, to the public the results of tests and their interpretation leading to conclusions about the degree of hazard or risk involved;
- The desirability of reducing the use of animals for toxicity testing where other methods, that may give a similar assurance of safety, are available; and
- Possible approaches for ensuring that relevant data become available to the public and authorities in the shortest possible time-frame, considering incentives and/or restrictions that might serve this purpose.

#### **Programme Area B:**

##### **Harmonization of classification and labelling of chemicals**

1. The Forum recognizes that global harmonization of the classification and labelling of chemicals greatly increases the protection of human health and our environment, as well as facilitating the flow of trade. Ongoing work will soon result in the completion of a globally harmonized system for the classification and labelling of chemicals. This system will include classification criteria, related labelling systems, and guidelines for material safety data sheets, which comprise the hazard communications elements of the system. The Forum should provide mechanisms for consultation and participation of all countries in the development process of a harmonized system for classification and labelling.

**The Globally Harmonized System (GHS) for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals should be agreed to by the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals coordinating group for the harmonization of chemical classification systems and fully adopted by the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations prior to Forum IV.**

**Guidance and other tools necessary for the implementation of the GHS should be made available to interested parties prior to Forum IV.**

**All countries are encouraged to implement the GHS as soon as possible with a view to have the system fully operational by 2008.**

**All countries, subject to their capacities and capabilities, should take account of the development of the GHS in any proposed changes to**

**existing systems for classification and labelling, and in the implementation and enforcement of their chemicals legislation.**

**Programme Area C:**

**Information exchange on toxic chemicals and chemical risks**

1. All governments should be encouraged to identify and/or to establish arrangements for the timely exchange of information on chemicals. Through the effective operation of such arrangements, barriers to information exchange would be more easily overcome. Relevant information could then be communicated in a timely and appropriate manner and, where appropriate, in at least one of the six official languages of the United Nations in addition to the required language(s), to all relevant parties.

The Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) participating organizations should take the lead for coordinating fundraising and implementation efforts to ensure that all government officials from developing countries and countries with economies in transition responsible for chemicals management have access to Internet and training on its use.

This type of arrangement may be described in a National Action Plan. It should include input from a broad range of stakeholders including all levels of government, non-governmental organizations, and the general public within the country. The Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) participating organizations, and their regional structures, where relevant, should consider facilitating information exchange both within and between countries by issuing general guidance.

IFCS is called upon to support the initiative to eliminate 'barriers to information exchange for the sound management of chemicals' in order to enhance communication among national, sub-regional, regional and international stakeholders.

**By 2005, at least five countries in each region, and by 2010, most countries should have fully operational arrangements in place for the exchange of information on hazardous chemicals.**

2. The Forum recognizes the role of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade for information exchange on toxic chemicals.

**All countries are encouraged to ratify or accede to the Rotterdam Convention with a view to its entry into force as soon as possible, preferably by Forum IV. To this end, all efforts must be made to ensure that the necessary procedures are put into place so that countries can successfully implement the Convention in a prompt manner.**

3. The Forum recognizes the importance of providing all relevant parties with safety information on the hazardous properties of chemicals in an easy-to-access,

easy-to-read and easy-to-understand format. All countries are urged to establish mechanisms to this effect using procedures that are consistent with those concerning the safety data sheets of the 1990 International Labour Organization (ILO) Chemicals Convention (No.170). Industry should communicate with the public, especially by dissemination of information on hazards connected to chemical production.

**By 2004, most countries should have procedures in place to ensure that any hazardous material put into circulation is accompanied, at a minimum, by appropriate and reliable safety information that is easy to access, read, and understand, consistent with the safety data sheets of the 1990 International Labour Organization Chemical Convention (No. 170) and taking into account the development of the Globally Harmonized System for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals as it develops.**

The Forum recognizes the need to ensure that essential health, safety and environmental information is not withheld under confidentiality restrictions.

**Programme Area D:  
Establishment of risk reduction programmes**

1. To protect human health and the environment (including surface and ground water), countries should establish ecologically sound and integrated strategies for the management of pests and, where appropriate, vectors for communicable diseases.

**By 2004, most countries should have in place integrated and ecologically sound pest management strategies. Where appropriate, specific strategies for control of vectors (for communicable diseases) should be established.**

2. The identification, neutralization, and safe disposal of obsolete stocks of pesticides and other chemicals (especially polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) must be urgently facilitated by provision of technical and financial assistance particularly in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. As well, future stockpiling of other obsolete pesticides and chemicals must be prevented. With respect to the final disposition of chemicals, the Forum and Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) participating organizations should promote the use of techniques that minimize risks, *i.e.* less polluting and safer technologies.

**By 2004, countries should have established relevant action plans, and at least two countries in each region should have commenced implementation of their National Action Plans with respect to disposal, considering the outcomes of relevant international agreements.**

3. Special attention should be paid to persistent and bio-accumulating toxic chemicals.

**Work on a global convention on persistent organic pollutants (POPs) should continue with a view to reach agreement, by the end of 2000, on a strong and effective convention that will encourage countries to:**

- **Adopt it at the Conference of Plenipotentiaries, to be held in Stockholm in May, 2001;**
- **Ratify it with a view to its entry into force as soon as possible, preferably by 2004.**

**The Forum Standing Committee is requested to invite countries and regions to present at Forum IV risk reduction initiatives on other chemicals of major concern.**

4. Major industrial accidents must be prevented. National systems for emergency preparedness and response should be developed in all countries. Such systems would include strategies for educating and training personnel. In developing such mechanisms, significant international guidance can be found in documents prepared by the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) participating organizations<sup>2</sup>.

**By 2002, 70 or more countries should have implemented systems aimed at preventing major industrial accidents and for emergency preparedness and response. These systems should be in accordance with international principles.**

5. Poisoning of pesticide users, especially agricultural workers and small farmers in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, must be prevented. The Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade will address aspects of this problem. However, in order to more comprehensively address the problem of acutely toxic pesticides, the Forum:

**Requests the Forum Standing Committee to provide initial input on the extent of the problem of acutely toxic pesticides, and provide guidance for sound risk management and reduction, including options for phasing out where appropriate, and report to Forum IV.**

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<sup>2</sup> Such as the 1993 ILO Convention (No. 174) on the Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents, the OECD Guiding Principles on Accident Preparedness and Response, the programme on Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at Local Level (APELL), the 1991 ILO Code of Practice on the Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents, and the 1999 IPCS Public Health and Chemical Incidents guidance document. In addition guidance exists in the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UN/ECE) Convention on Trans-boundary Effects of Industrial Accidents.

**Urges countries to apply the existing mechanisms under the Rotterdam Convention to notify the Secretariat for the Rotterdam Convention on severely hazardous pesticide formulations under conditions of use in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, and request the Secretariat for the Rotterdam Convention to report on progress to Forum IV.**

6. IFCS should support and encourage the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) in its efforts to revise the International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides at its Biennial Conference in November 2001.

**Following adoption of the revised Code, IFCS should (a) support and encourage governments to play an active role in its observance; and (b) work with the FAO and all main stakeholders to enable them to play an active role in monitoring progress on implementation of the Code.**

7. Poison centres, providing toxicological information and advice, should be established and strengthened, with relevant clinical and analytical toxicological facilities developed according to the needs identified and resources available at the level of each country. In developing these facilities, relevant international guidance can be found in the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS) Guidelines for Poisons Control published by the World Health Organization (WHO).

**By 2002, poison centres should have been established in 30 or more countries that do not yet have such centres, and further strengthened in 70 or more countries where they already exist. Extensive progress should have been made on national systems for collection of harmonized data, including categorization by, for example, type of poisoning, chemical identity, structure, use or function.**

8. Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs)/emission inventories are recognized in Chapter 19 of Agenda 21 as an important tool to raise public awareness about potential chemical risks and as an effective environmental management tool to stimulate chemical risk reduction. Although PRTRs are designed to be country-specific, there are commonalities between national systems. Common characteristics of many successful PRTR programmes include: a listing of pollutants; environmental multi-media and/or integrated reporting of releases and transfers (i.e. to air, water, and land); reporting of data by source; reporting of data periodically (normally annually); and making data and information available to the public.

**By 2004, at least two additional countries in each IFCS region should have established a PRTR/emission inventory and countries without a PRTR/emission inventory should consider to initiate a national PRTR/emission inventory design process which involves affected and interested parties and takes into consideration national circumstances and needs.**

This priority is part of a broader Forum PRTR/Emission Inventory Action Plan which is annexed to the Forum III Final Report.

9. Governments and industry should consider, subject to domestic regulatory requirements, or as provided for in international agreements, granting the public's right-to-know the chemical constituents of consumer products, at least on a qualitative basis, in order to enable them to make informed consumer choices.

#### **Programme Area E:**

#### **Strengthening of national capabilities and capacities for management of chemicals**

1. Countries should increase their efforts to systematically develop an integrated and coordinated approach to manage chemicals safely. Countries should therefore prepare and regularly update national profiles, identify capacity building priorities, and develop sound national action plans for them. Those countries that have completed a National Profile should make it as widely available as possible through such means as the UNITAR/ECB National Profile Internet Homepage.

**By 2002, National Profiles, based on a multi-stakeholder process, should have been developed by most countries.**

**By 2002, all countries should have designated an appropriate contact point (IFCS National Focal Point) and have established an intersectoral coordinating effort.**

2. National<sup>3</sup> policies or action plans should be developed through a multi-stakeholder process and based on information from the National Profiles. These policies/plans should be reviewed and revised from time to time as required. This should include information and details pertaining to all of the following:

- the development of effective national legislation, policies and enforcement,
- implementation of educational programmes and other projects designed to raise national awareness,
- capacity building related to risk reduction/risk management,
- strengthening institutional mechanisms and programmes,
- strengthening national information systems, networks, and Internet links.

Safer and cleaner technologies must be utilised to avoid, or to greatly reduce, risks from hazardous chemicals to the health and safety of workers, the general population, and to the environment. The development and use of these technologies should be in National Action Plans. Industry has a special obligation to participate in the implementation of risk reduction programmes.

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<sup>3</sup> Whenever in this text the term national is used, it means national or other institutional level as appropriate.

**Although risk reduction activities are primarily national responsibilities, regional and international risk reduction programmes are warranted for those problems that are sub-regional, regional and international in scope.**

**By 2005, national policies with objectives, priorities, strategies and action plans with targets for improving the management of chemicals should have been developed in most countries and regions.**

3. Countries requiring external assistance should include capacity building for the management of chemicals as a national priority for development assistance and coordinate among relevant ministries clear and well-defined requests for external additional resources. In programmes against poverty, for agricultural development etc, the dimension of environment should be included, and other ministries such as those of planning should be involved. The Forum urges donor countries and organizations to undertake to strengthen their assistance programmes, at both policy and technical levels, and to report progress through the OECD biennial reports on assistance.

**OECD countries, other IFCS participants, non-profit organizations, and other institutions, should begin to work immediately to mobilize sufficient financial resources and technical assistance for the sound management of chemicals, including technology transfer as appropriate, providing opportunities to all countries to support activities under all the Forum programmes of action.**

**The Forum Standing Committee should review assistance given to countries to support capacity building for the sound management of chemicals and report back to Forum IV.**

The Forum encourages coordination at international level of the various efforts to support strengthening of capacities in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, integrating work on Prior Informed Consent (PIC), persistent organic pollutants (POPs), obsolete stocks, Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs), pesticides etc. to the extent possible and based on the specific and explicit demands of countries seeking support for strengthening their chemicals management.

4. Enhanced access to information on various aspects of capacity building activities and needs related to the sound management of chemicals is a prerequisite for planning, implementing, evaluating and coordinating capacity building projects for the sound management of chemicals. As such it may also contribute to international, regional and national efforts to raise the awareness about the need for increased assistance to strengthen national capacities and capabilities for the sound management of chemicals.

**The Forum supports the development of an Information Exchange Network on Capacity Building for the Sound Management of Chemicals within the framework of the IFCS and calls upon countries, international organizations, industry, labour unions, public interest groups and the academia to actively participate in this effort by 2003.**

**Programme Area F:**

**Prevention of illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous products**

1. The Forum requests that the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) participating organizations establish a working group on illegal trafficking, drawing on the expertise of the Forum and considering recommendations given by the regional groups. This working group shall build upon ongoing activities within the IOMC participating organizations and shall assess illegal traffic in toxic and dangerous substances, review measures to detect and prevent illegal traffic, and make recommendations as to how its participating organizations may advance, add value to, and help integrate the work undertaken by other organizations, such as Interpol, the Organization for Prohibition of Chemical Weapons, and the World Customs Organization. This assessment and recommendations shall be considered by Forum IV; interim reports on the progress of analysis should be made to the Forum Standing Committee in the following areas:

- national legislation and enforcement programmes;
- capacity to detect illegal import and export;
- resources and operational mechanisms for technical assistance for developing countries and for countries with economies in transition;
- the extent of illegal traffic at international, regional, sub-regional, and national levels, and the assessment of its impact at these levels;
- the extent of coordination and cooperation among all stakeholders;
- how international conventions related to the sound management of chemicals and national laws may be more effectively applied to the transboundary movement of chemicals.

2. The Forum recommends that governments elaborate national strategies of prevention, detection, and control of illegal traffic, including the strengthening of laws, judicial mechanisms, and the capacity of customs administrations and other national authorities to control and prevent illegal shipments of chemicals, by enhancing information systems, e.g. case reporting systems, training, and other practical measures. In particular, in line with Article 13 (1) of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, countries should give appropriate support to initiatives taken by World Customs Organization members aiming at the attribution of specific harmonized system codes for certain chemicals falling under the Rotterdam Convention and POPs, and enabling their comparison to environmental compliance data.