

**Forum V Plenary Open  
Information/Discussion Session  
on  
Tools and Approaches for  
Applying Precaution  
in the Context of Chemicals  
Safety**

**Background**

# Background

- At a national level, precaution – or taking preventive action in the face of uncertain risks – is well known and applied domestically by many countries
- At the international level, however, the concept of precaution (and its application) has often led to controversy

# More Background

- There is a continued need to improve understandings regarding the differences in domestic chemicals regulation and how decisions are made under conditions of uncertainty
- It is beneficial to governments and other stakeholders to work towards an understanding of how precaution is and can be implemented more clearly and effectively in the context of chemicals management activities and the tools and approaches for doing so.

# Efforts to provide guidance for applying precaution in chemicals safety

- Numerous efforts: European Commission, Switzerland, Canada, European Environment Agency, UNEP, WHO, Austrian Government. Others in academic circles
- Other efforts on guidance for decision-making under uncertainty

# Agenda 21 – Chemicals Safety

- 19.48. The objective of the programme area is to eliminate unacceptable or unreasonable risks and, to the extent economically feasible, to reduce risks posed by toxic chemicals, by employing a broad-based approach involving a wide range of risk reduction options and by taking precautionary measures derived from a broad-based life-cycle analysis.
- 19.49 (a) Consider adopting policies based on ...precautionary, anticipatory and life-cycle approaches to chemicals management, covering manufacturing, trade, transport, use and disposal;
- 19.60 - Governments should foster preventive and precautionary approaches and ensure compliance with safety management rules

# IFCS statements on precaution

- Bahia Declaration:
- “*Reaffirm* our commitment to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development including the principles on sustainable development, capacity building, access to information and the precautionary approach”.

# IFCS statements on precaution

- The associated Priorities for Action beyond 2000:
- “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. 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.”

# SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy

- Over Arching Policy Strategy (adopted) -

## IV. Objectives

### A. Risk reduction

- 14. The objectives of the Strategic Approach with regard to risk reduction are:
- (e) Appropriately to apply the precautionary approach, as set out in Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, while aiming to achieve that chemicals are used or produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment.

# SAICM Global Plan of Action – Table C

- Participants in the process to develop the Strategic Approach were unable to conclude their discussions on a number of activities, as reflected in table C of document SAICM/ICCM.1/4
- Bearing in mind that the Global Plan of Action is an evolving tool to assist in achieving the objectives of the Strategic Approach, stakeholders may wish to discuss these items.

# SAICM GPA – Table C

- Apply precautionary measures when there are reasonable grounds for concern, even when there is a lack of full scientific certainty as to a chemical's environmental or health effects.

# Rationale for session

- Discussions about how to apply precaution can become overly involved with legal, trade and other generally political considerations that can hinder sharing of concrete tools and approaches for protection of health and the environment under uncertainty.
- Many countries (developing and developed) have noted the lack of clarity as to the concerns raised by some countries regarding how to apply precaution in particular instances.

# Rationale for session

- There is a need for an open discussion about how countries and other actors approach decision-making in the face of uncertainty to protect health and ecosystems - how precaution is applied implicitly or explicitly in practice – the tools and approaches needed.

# Goals and Objectives

- To advance open dialogue and understanding about how precaution is applied in practice with regards to chemical safety to protect health and environment and implementation of goals identified in IFCS declarations and recommendations and the SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy (OPS).

# Goals and Objectives

- To discuss the practical experience of individual countries and other stakeholders with regards to application of precaution in chemical management activities with the goal of sharing and developing lessons learnt, both positive and negative
  - To identify tools and approaches that may be useful and applicable to decision-makers across nations to effect more health and ecosystem protective decisions with regards to chemicals management.
  - Provide practical advice and input to advance chemicals safety efforts particularly at the local level.

# Goals and Objectives

- To better understand commonalities and differences in tools and approaches for applying precaution in chemical safety
- To discuss benefits, barriers, needs, and opportunities to help improve chemicals management at a range of levels as well as potential next steps to achieve this objective.

# Presenters

- *Franz Xaver Perrez, Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland*
- *Johanna Lissinger Peitz, Swedish Chemicals Inspectorate*
- *John Shoaff, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency*
- *Jesus Marin Ruiz, CIVATOX, Nicaragua*
- *Romy Quijano, Pesticide Action Network*
- *Stephen Johnson, Alliance Boots*