

Report of the side event on South-South Cooperation held at Forum V on Monday 25 September 2006

The side event was organized by the SAICM secretariat at the request of the IFCS secretariat. A “thought-starter” paper presenting the concept of South-South cooperation was made available. A panel comprising Dr Soroush Modabberi of the Iranian Department of Environment, Mr Jack Weinberg of the Environmental Health Forum and Dr Lilian Corra of the Asociación Argentina de Medicos por el Medio Ambiente made presentations to initiate the discussion.

The Forum plenary may wish to note the following themes that emerged from the ensuing discussion.

- There is a need to identify, disseminate information on and make use of existing chemicals management expertise and successful experiences in developing and transition economy countries and existing mechanisms for South-South cooperation. Basic research and the development of databases are required to establish needs and capabilities for South-South cooperation, to identify stakeholders and capacity-building materials and activities. Focal point networks, web sites and other tools can be used to disseminate information.
- Much useful expertise resides with non-governmental organizations and professional associations, which, if active in the sector concerned, may be able to interact with counterparts in other countries more easily than Governments and to deliver assistance cost-effectively. Sometimes Governments will be best placed to carry forward South-South cooperation.
- Cooperative action is desirable. It is important that all stakeholder groups, including Governments, non-governmental organizations and professional associations, remain engaged and mutually supportive in order to strengthen and increase the effectiveness of South-South cooperation efforts and ensure continuity.
- One of the strengths of South-South cooperation is its potential to deliver capacity-building more cost-effectively. However, it should be emphasized that such cooperation is not intended to replace existing bilateral and multilateral development cooperation but to supplement and catalyse it.
- It should be recognized that while many developing and transition economy countries have considerable capacity in chemicals management, they often lack the resources to share their expertise with other such countries and replicate successful experiences. It is therefore important to secure sustainable financing to facilitate and extend South-South cooperation.
- In that regard, partnerships with donor countries in a “South-South-North” relationship may offer advantages for all parties. Capable countries of the “South” may be empowered to share their expertise with counterparts in other less advanced countries of the South. At the same time donor countries may be provided with new ideas and opportunities to provide assistance in a catalytic

and more cost-effective manner through partners of the South. Such partners may be better attuned to the problems and challenges faced by the recipient countries and can provide expertise at a level appropriate to the needs of the countries in question, taking account of work already done, local lifestyles and language requirements.

- South-South cooperation in chemicals management can be pursued at various levels of complexity, ranging from the simple exchange of information to transferring technology, replicating successful experiences and making infrastructure available for regional use.