INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME ON CHEMICAL SAFETY

REPORT

8th MEETING OF THE RISK ASSESSMENT STEERING GROUP

Held at WHO Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland
24 March 2010

1. The IPCS Risk Assessment Steering Group (RASG) met at WHO Headquarters on 24 March 2010. The list of participants is provided in Annex 1.

Opening, welcome and agenda

2. The meeting was opened by the Chair with a welcome to participants attending the RASG for the first time. The provisional agenda (Annex 2) was adopted.

3. It was noted that the previous 'meeting' of the RASG had been by teleconference in early 2007, and that this was the first face-to-face meeting of the RASG to take place since June 2006.

WHO/PHE Chemical Risk Assessment Status Report

4. The Secretariat reported on chemical risk assessment work undertaken by the Department of Public Health and Environment (PHE) in WHO since the previous RASG teleconference (early 2007). It was noted that WHO Chemical Safety publish an annual Activity Report on the IPCS website. The report included CICADs which had been published and the status of the CICADs which were in progress in 2007 but not yet published.

5. The ongoing risk assessment projects initiated since 2007 were described. This included the risk assessment for the use of DDT in Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS) in relation to the position of DDT under the Stockholm Convention, which had become a comprehensive assessment and hence would be published as an Environmental Health Criteria (EHC) document once completed.

6. Progress on risk assessment activities in collaboration with the WHO Pesticides Evaluation Scheme (WHOPES) were also described - development of generic models for the risk assessment of insecticides used in public health situations - IRS, space-spraying and aircraft disinsection).

Developments in National Risk Assessment Programmes

7. An update of sources of information on chemical risk assessments from the US EPA was provided, including:

- IRIS (Integrated Risk Information System) with technical support documents;
- ISAs (Integrated Safety Assessments) covering certain air pollutants;
- HERO database (Health and Environmental Research Online) providing public access to the scientific literature used in making regulatory decisions;
- PPRTVs (provisional peer-reviewed toxicity values) - for chemicals for which a full IRIS review is not yet available (to be made available online); and
- Guidance documents on developments in risk assessment methodology and new technologies (e.g. nanomaterials).

It was noted that US EPA risk assessment work on chromium (VI) would need to be taken into account for the completion of this CICAD.

8. The diversion of resources for chemical risk assessment activities in EU countries into REACH-related activities was noted, with a shift of responsibilities to Industry and fewer assessments of individual chemical substances being performed at National level.

9. An update of activities at ATSDR (Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry) was provided, including:

- Toxicological Profiles are now amended through the publication of Addenda documents, rather than a full revision of the Profile document.
- Minimal Risk Levels (MRLs) may be published separately from Toxicological Profiles, to facilitate more rapid dissemination of MRLs.
- The former HazDat database has been replaced by a new information system (Sequoia) to track the release of hazardous substances from contaminated sites.

Reflections on the CICAD Programme to date

10. The Chair gave a report on the developments which had affected the WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Programme since the previous communication of the RASG in early 2007. A number of developments had impacted adversely on the Programme, in particular significant reduction in donor funding and related loss of staff within the WHO Secretariat. These had resulted in no new CICAD activities being initiated since 2007.

11. The strengths and weaknesses of the CICAD Programme were reviewed by the RASG, informed by the experiences of the longstanding members of the RASG and by the results of the user surveys and the independent review which had been undertaken.

12. The strengths of the Programme included the broad range of users in a wide range of countries which were using CICADs, and the potential for enhancement of the national assessment providing the source document in having an international peer review (often this had resulted in new data being identified - frequently key studies - from other parts of the world). Clear demand for CICADs had been shown among users in both Developing and Developed countries.

13. The weaknesses identified included the perception that Developing country priorities were not well reflected in the chemicals which were assessed, and government regulators from Developing countries had not been involved to a significant extent in the Programme. Also it was not known whether Developing countries had used local exposure information to supplement the example risk

characterizations presented in CICADs (as had originally been envisaged). There were also concerns about meeting the needs of the broad range of users with only a limited range of products, and the absence of an updating strategy for CICADs.

Development of a Future Strategic Direction for the WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Programme

14. The RASG discussed the possibilities for future strategic direction of the Programme. Key issues and priorities identified were as follows:

- the priorities of Developing countries had to be addressed;
- risk assessment activities could only continue if new funds became available;
- the focus had to be on fewer assessments - the previous format of the CICAD Programme (with 5-10 substances being evaluated in parallel) could not be continued;
- the list of substances previously nominated for international risk assessment was now obsolete;
- there was a need to focus on assessments which would address Developing country needs and could attract funds from alternative donors;
- the focus had to be on providing regulatory information which could be used by those in regulatory and risk management positions;
- the gap between risk assessment and risk management (including risk-benefit and cost-benefit aspects) should be addressed; and
- involvement from developing countries with limited resources would only be achieved if an immediate benefit could be identified.

15. The following priorities for future risk assessment activities were identified:

- case studies based on Developing country scenarios were needed, with the emphasis on practical aspects rather than comprehensive assessment of the scientific literature;
- future activities of the harmonization group, following the consultation exercise immediately preceding the present RASG meeting, would require case studies to utilise developed risk assessment tools;
- developing country involvement in the generation of case studies would increase both experience and confidence, and represented a training opportunity; and
- the WHO Programme should focus on risk assessment activity which could not be carried out by other institutions, both for the types of document (e.g. risk management case studies) and the substances assessed (e.g. chemicals no longer used in developed countries but continuing to present a problem elsewhere).

16. Two particular aspects:

1) the training aspect of developing country involvement in the risk assessment programme, and
2) the creation of different types of product for different end-users should be highlighted to potential new donors who have mandates for supporting training, economic development and compliance with international treaty obligations.

17. It was noted that informal regional networks of developing countries already existed in the context of chemicals management. Engagement with these informal networks was an alternative to engaging with individual countries.

Operational issues, governance and priority actions

18. The RASG agreed that the ongoing CICAD document on chromium (VI) could be adapted to demonstrate the new intended focus of the WHO Risk Assessment Programme. A case study from a developing country (including practical risk management action) would be added to the document (an institution in a developing country known to be working on this substance was identified to be approached). Once finalized this CICAD would be used to demonstrate the added value which could be achieved by the WHO Programme.

19. US EPA would be invited to contribute to the finalization of the CICAD for chromium (VI) to benefit from their recent experience with this substance.

20. Representatives from developing countries with experience in chemicals risk assessment and management at a national level would be invited to join future RASG activities.

21. Enhanced co-operation with other international organisations involved with chemical risk assessment (e.g. OECD, UNEP) should be sought. UNEP should be invited to assist in identifying and making contact with informal networks of developing countries. OECD should be invited to assist in identifying which OECD countries and organisations were engaged in risk assessment activities, and which substances were being assessed. It was noted that JMPR and JECFA (joint WHO and FAO activities) would be publishing future work plans for the benefit of co-operation with other organisations, and it was hoped that other organisations could make similar information available.

Next meeting

22. It was anticipated that for resource reasons the majority of future RASG business would be conducted by teleconference. The WHO Secretariat would make the necessary arrangements.

Annex 1

Meeting of the IPCS Risk Assessment Steering Group (RASG)
WHO/HQ, Geneva, Switzerland

24 March 2010

List of participants

This annex has been removed from the copy of the Meeting Report published on the Internet. Further details are available on request from the WHO Secretariat.

Annex 2

8th Meeting of the Risk Assessment Steering Group
24 March 2010, WHO Headquarters, Geneva, Switzerland

Provisional Agenda

1. **Welcome and Opening of Meeting**

   The meeting will be opened by the Chair of the Committee.
   Secretariat announcements.

2. **Approval of the Agenda**

3. **WHO/PHE Chemical Risk Assessment Status Report**

   A report on chemical risk assessment work undertaken by the Department of Public Health and Environment (PHE)will be provided, e.g. under the CICAD Programme.

4. **Developments in National Risk Assessment Programmes**

   Participants will be invited to present developments in their national risk assessment programmes that may impact or influence the future directions of WHO risk assessment work.

5. **Future Directions for the WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Programme**

   First, the meeting will be requested to review the outcomes of the WHO Meeting on Strengthening Global Collaboration in Chemical Risk Assessment, with a view to identifying and discussing issues relevant to the WHO/PHE risk assessment programme.

   Second, the meeting will be requested to provide advice on the future directions of the WHO/PHE chemical risk assessment programme, including:

   - Nature and scope of assessments
   - Prioritization
   - Linkages with national, regional and international risk assessment programmes
   - Tools and processes for risk assessment, including peer review, guidelines for preparation of CICADs
   - Governance/administrative arrangements (RASG)

6. **Close of Meeting**