

**Eighteenth Teleconference of the Bureau of the
International Conference on Chemicals Management for its fifth session**
6 October 2021 from 14:00 – 16:30 CET

REGIONAL BRIEFINGS – SUMMARY REPORT

1) Introduction

The ICCM5 Bureau at its last meeting on 21 July 2021 agreed to convene Regional Briefings in early September 2021. The objectives of these briefings are: (i) to inform the regions on the results of the survey on the design of the future virtual work; (ii) for the IP Co-chairs to present the way forward in the Intersessional Process; (iii) to give the regions the opportunity to provide feedback to the SAICM Secretariat and the IP Co-chairs; and (iv) to give the regions the opportunity to discuss their perspectives among themselves.

The [Regional Briefings Concept Note](#) was circulated on 17 August 2021 and is available on the SAICM website. Participants were reminded that the Co-facilitators of the four Virtual Working Groups (VWGs) have provided video recordings on the outcomes of the VWG process held between October 2020 and February 2021, which participants were invited to watch in order to be well informed for the discussions during the briefings. The recordings are available on the [SAICM website](#) under “Outputs & Recordings” for each VWG.

The participation at the Regional Briefings was open to all interested stakeholders. The participants represented all SAICM stakeholder groups and different sectors. The total number of participants registered for the regional briefings is as follows: Africa: 75; Asia Pacific: 77; Central and Eastern Europe: 67; and Latin American and Caribbean: 82. The list of participants will be available on the SAICM website.

This report provides a general overview of the Regional Briefings held on 7 and 8 September 2021, and highlighting the key issues raised during the Regional Briefings for Africa, Asia Pacific, Central and Eastern Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. The detailed reports from each of the Regional Briefings are available [here](#).

2) Presentation of survey results (SAICM Secretariat)

The SAICM Coordinator Ms. Sharma presented the results of the Survey on stakeholders’ experiences of the Virtual Working Group Process held between October 2020 and February 2021. The [full report](#) including the raw data of the survey responses as well as a [summary](#) of survey responses are available on the [SAICM website](#).

3) Moving forward (IP Co-chairs)

The IP Co-chair Ms. Judith Torres presented the IP Co-chairs’ document [Elements for discussion on the Intersessional Process moving forward](#) since the second IP Co-chair, Mr. David Morin could not attend the briefings due to national elections that were taking place in Canada.

Ms. Torres referred to the four videos of the VWGs Co-facilitators summarizing the outcomes of each VWG to inform stakeholders and foster discussions during this regional briefing. She noted that the objective of the VWG process was to maintain the momentum and to advance discussions as COVID-19 prevented SAICM stakeholders from meeting face-to-face at IP4 and ICCM5. Thereafter, she presented [Elements for discussion](#)

[on the Intersessional Process moving forward](#) including three guiding questions to facilitate the exchange of regional perspectives. She pointed out that the feedback from the regions would be very important for the design of the next steps in the Intersessional Process towards IP4 and noted that the IP Co-chairs will take into account the views expressed during the VWGs, as well as the results from the survey, and the outcomes of the regional briefings. With that, she thanked the participants in advance for their valuable contributions to this process and referred to the three questions to be discussed under the next agenda item.

4) Regional perspectives

This agenda item served as an open forum to share regional perspectives on what has been heard so far during this Regional Briefing and to discuss possible ways forward for the next phase of the virtual work. The IP Co-chairs' three guiding questions were used to facilitate the exchange.

- 1) How can we take the best advantage of this time to move the work forward to contribute to a successful outcome when we are able to meet face to face at IP4?
- 2) Considering the outcomes of the work to date, what would be the top priorities for your region to advance the work in preparation for IP4? What type of schedule/level of work would be manageable for participants?
- 3) Are there any gaps in terms of areas in need of further discussion but not identified in document IP.4/2 Compilation of recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 and discussions during the VWGs?

Africa

With regards to the *process* of the VWGs, a number of issues were raised by the participants of the Africa region. It was noted that the workload was considered too high, that too many meetings were scheduled within a short period of time and that connectivity issues have further contributed to complicate the participation of a number of stakeholders from the Africa region. One member of the region did not consider the VWG process to have been fair, inclusive and transparent. She noted that submissions from the Africa region were not reflected in the meeting documents. She was supported by another delegate who requested that the Co-facilitators' final reports be endorsed by all stakeholders, should be compiled into one document, and that more emphasis be put on the interrelations between the issues that are dealt with in the different VWGs.

In order to improve the process for the next phase of the virtual work, the work should focus on a few smaller issues that would help to move the whole process forward and that can be solved either in real-time virtually or through written comments. Secondly, smaller in-person meetings to help facilitate some of the more sensitive issues that require in-depth discussions. Thirdly, the opportunity to hold more regional briefings with interpretation was welcomed.

With regards to the *content* that was discussed in the VWGs, one representative from the region stressed that ensuring a robust and sustainable financing mechanism must be prioritized above any of the other issues. In this regard, the role and responsibilities of the industry needs to be addressed, and double standards must be resolved. Furthermore, several principles were raised, which should be included in the new SAICM instrument: (i) the 'sound management of chemicals and waste' should remain the leading principle, not to be diluted by 'safe management' or addressing 'pollution'; (ii) the precautionary principle must be better defined and implemented to mitigate risks related to chemicals exposure; (iii) a human rights based approach must be applied throughout the whole new instrument; and (iv) a clear articulation of circular economy principles and what these mean with regards to material flows, is essential.

Asia Pacific

The discussions in the Asia Pacific regional briefing mainly focused on points to improve the modality/process and content of the VWGs to prepare for the face to face meetings when they can be held.

While the value of establishing the VWGs to continue the momentum and ensure a common understanding and enhance ownership of the beyond 2020 instrument was recognised, a member pointed out that low participation of stakeholders, especially from the Asia Pacific region in the VWG process was not in line with

SAICM's multisectoral and multistakeholder approach. The analysis of the survey results should specifically provide insights on this issue as well as ideas on how to improve the modality of VWGs.

In this regard, a hybrid approach to meetings was suggested to help overcome the challenges faced by developing countries due connectivity problems and could improve participation and engagement, until full face-to-face-meetings are feasible. There was a call to minimize the number of the VWGs, and given that the VWGs mandates are so extensive, the creation of smaller groups addressing specific issues identified by the VWGs may help move the work forward. Convening regular regional briefings could facilitate Asia Pacific region engagement and discussions feeding into the VWGs. One member also stressed the importance of national consultations with all relevant stakeholders on the outcomes of the VWGs. The region requested the compilation of the outcomes of all VWGs into one single document and made available for comment, with an aim to facilitate the comprehension of the latest text by all stakeholders and identification of areas of interlinkages.

It was suggested that a dedicated discussion on the science-policy interface (SPI) be held, and there was a query on whether the discussions held in the VWG on SPI would be forwarded to the fifth session of UNEA in February 2021. It was also noted that discussion was needed on the structure of the framework document for its adoption at ICCM5 while other matters, such as procedures could be postponed to after ICCM5.

Central and Eastern Europe

The discussion mainly focused on the pros and cons of hybrid meetings versus face-to-face meetings. Several members supported hybrid meetings given that the continued challenges faced with the Covid-19 pandemic and the need to continue the momentum and make progress. Delegates stated that IP4 can be held as a hybrid meeting in Bucharest, following Romania's continued offer to host the meeting.

Other delegates did not support hybrid meetings noting that undertaking negotiations in either a virtual or hybrid setting is extremely difficult. Hybrid meetings also have their challenges with connectivity issues for those who are not on location. The idea of having livestream meetings was also supported for being a useful tool to address many potential organizational challenges, which may arise due to unexpected development of pandemic and related restrictions.

It was also mentioned that a resolution on chemicals, specifically on the Science-Policy Interface (SPI) is expected at the upcoming fifth session UNEA in February 2022, and the discussions under the VWG process on SPI could help inform the discussions at UNEA-5.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Given the limited participation by the region in the VWGs due to challenges accessing the SAICM website, connectivity issues and different time zones, the outcomes of the VWGs cannot be validated as a region. There is a need to establish a more transparent and inclusive participation of all the different actors in the region.

The members emphasized the need to identify the missing countries and key stakeholders and to encourage their involvement and participation in future work. It was noted that the workload was considered too high, and suggestions were made to reduce and simplify the issues to be discussed, identify priorities that are important for the region and to make the agendas of the VWGs more dynamic. A proposal was made to establish a roadmap to achieve the SAICM goals and to find the right balance between ambitions and a realistic approach to moving towards the beyond 2020 instrument. One participant noted that the working groups were very long and tiring. Finally, it was suggested that contributions should be limited to electronic feedback to ensure equal participation of all stakeholders.

Increased action by all UN organizations at the country level was highlighted. The need to increase the involvement of the private sector was highlighted, as well as importance of sharing information on successful approaches, good practices and voluntary actions at the regional level. Finally, the importance of regional capacity building was recognized, with the involvement of all sectors.

5) Closing remarks (ICCM5 President)

Ms. Breyer thanked the region for the opportunity to present herself and expressed her honour to have been nominated by Germany to serve in the role of President of ICCM5. Ms. Breyer stated that she has served in several roles in the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Protection and Nuclear Safety in Germany, including 1½ years of “apprenticeship” in chemicals management when she supported the negotiations on the Stockholm Convention in Bonn in the year 2000. Since 2020, she holds the position Director-General for Immission Control, Transport, Safety of Installations, Chemical Safety and Environmental Health.

She began her remarks by reiterating Germany’s firm commitment to hosting a successful ICCM5 whenever global in-person meetings are feasible. In the interim, however, she made clear that we cannot allow the virus to keep us from making progress. She highlighted, that the sound management of chemicals and waste would be vital and integral to address challenges which have deteriorated due to the pandemic, such as poverty, inequality and food insecurity.

Ms. Breyer thanked the Co-Chairs of the intersessional process, the Co-facilitators and participants of the virtual working groups for their commitment in these challenging times to keep the process running. The pandemic forced us to set up completely new working modalities. This change in working modalities do not come without setbacks and failures. Now is the time to evaluate our experiences and learn how to improve our working modus to strengthen our approach leading to IP 4 and to ICCM5. She thanked all stakeholders for their continuing support of this process and pointed out how valuable the region’s feedback is for designing the next phase of the virtual work, and that their perspectives will be considered.

Ms. Breyer pointed out that full and inclusive participation in the Intersessional Process and at ICCM5 is the common vision and ambition, and that she, in close consultation with the ICCM5 Bureau, is continuously assessing the situation worldwide. However, at this stage, it would be too early to determine dates for a face-to-face IP4 and ICCM5. In the meantime, she reiterated the need to adapt to the current circumstances and proceed our work leading up to a SAICM, updated and advanced in the light of the 2030 Agenda, that is inclusive and for which all relevant stakeholders in all sectors take ownership and responsibility for its implementation.

She ended by expressing her excitement to work with all stakeholders on the journey towards a successful ICCM5.
