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**Implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management:
strengthening of national chemicals management capacities**

**Citizens' report on a global outreach campaign on the Strategic
Approach to International Chemicals Management**

Note by the secretariat

The secretariat has the honour to circulate, for the information of participants, an executive summary, prepared by the International POPs Elimination Network, of a citizens' report on a global outreach campaign on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management. The executive summary, contained in the annex to the present note, is being circulated as submitted without formal editing.

* SAICM/ICCM.2/1.

Annex

Citizens' Report: Global Outreach Campaign on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)

Prepared by the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN)
April 2009

Executive Summary

NGO Contributions to SAICM Implementation: Global Outreach Campaign

Public interest non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and civil society organizations (CSOs) have important roles to play in successful SAICM implementation. The SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy (OPS) addresses the need for a "multi-stakeholder approach in pursuing the sound management of chemicals," and asserts the need to "promote and support meaningful and active participation by all sectors of civil society, particularly women, workers and indigenous communities, in regulatory and other decision-making processes that relate to chemical safety."¹ Six international NGO networks² have registered as SAICM NGO focal points and are working together actively to promote SAICM implementation efforts by their constituent NGOs in all regions. However, despite these efforts, many NGOs around the world are still unaware of SAICM and lack the necessary resources and capacity to participate as effective stakeholders.

To promote effective SAICM participation and undertake enabling activities for NGOs and CSOs in developing and transition countries, these six international NGO networks have developed a joint SAICM NGO Global Outreach Campaign with the following elements:

- **Common Statement in support of the SAICM process³:** The Common Statement reiterates key elements of the SAICM documents and includes an NGO pledge to help implement SAICM by engaging in international, national and local chemical safety efforts to reform domestic chemicals assessment and management laws, policies and practices in all countries. It has been translated into thirteen languages and has been endorsed by more than 1,000 organizations in more than 100 countries.⁴ The Common Statement is being used as a campaign tool to help raise chemical safety awareness and to bring new organizations into the SAICM arena from such sectors as health professionals, trade unions and others.
- **Global mini-grant program:** The project supported the execution of 51 activities in 36 developing and transition countries to raise awareness of SAICM and to implement activities related to SAICM objectives. Examples of activities include organizing multi-stakeholder events with government, industry and public interest representatives to raise awareness of SAICM; training on pesticides and education about less hazardous alternatives; creation of a public web site on chemical safety issues; promotion of zero waste approaches to waste management; and production of a report on international trade of toxic substances.

1 SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy paragraphs 9 and 16

2 Health Care Without Harm (HCWH); International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN); International Society of Doctors for the Environment, (ISDE); Pesticide Action Network International (PAN); Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF); and the World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA)

3 <http://www.ipen.org/campaign/statement.html>

4 Organizations from 107 countries endorsed the Common Statement. Of these, 90 were from developing or transition countries. The full list is at <http://www.ipen.org/campaign/signed.html>.

- **Educational booklets:** The campaign is producing a series of educational booklets designed to help build NGO awareness about threats to public health and the environment from toxic chemical exposure, and to help build NGO capacity to address these threats. There are four booklets: NGO Guides to SAICM, POPs, Hazardous Pesticides, and Heavy Metals. They are being translated into the UN languages.
- **Global Citizens' Report:** This report describes the state of SAICM implementation in developing and transition countries from the perspectives of public interest NGOs and CSOs. It documents progress, and points to directions where more work is needed. It also provides a sample of the work of public interest NGOs and CSOs to protect human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals in line with SAICM objectives.

We have documented more than 300 activities conducted by public interest NGOs that relate to SAICM implementation. The activities include work on 68 of the 273 items in the GPA and all five principal OPS Objectives: risk reduction, knowledge and information, governance, capacity building, and illegal traffic. Interventions have ranged from local activities to national and international work. These activities cover a wide variety of issues including: education and awareness, alternative practices in agriculture and waste management, outreach to the health and labor sectors, policy recommendations such as removing lead in paint or development of legal frameworks for chemical regulation, and convening of stakeholders from all sectors, including industry and government. The trade union sector has also contributed by conducting seminars and courses on chemical management to increase worker capacities to work more safely with hazardous chemicals, such as identification of chemicals used in the workplace, risk assessment, and assistance in the implementation of preventive measures.

NGOs will continue contributing to chemical safety objectives within the limitations of available resources. International NGO networks will continue to encourage this by linking efforts and providing expertise and resources. Thanks to the initial donors, this post ICCM-1 NGO Campaign has been very successful, and has provided a solid base to build on. Additional resources to continue and expand these joint programs on SAICM Outreach and implementation will build NGO capacity and greatly advance the SAICM 2020 goal.

NGO Views of SAICM Implementation

Since 2006, SAICM implementation has advanced, but the pace has been slow and uneven, and it does not appear that the global community is yet on track to achieve SAICM's 2020 objective. The SAICM High Level Declaration signals that chemical safety should become an important part of national policy. Some countries have moved forward to form inter-ministerial committees with multi-stakeholder participation, name national focal points, survey chemical use, and develop plans for implementation. At the regional level, Africa, Central and Eastern Europe, and Latin America and the Caribbean have all developed multi-stakeholder coordination committees to facilitate regional SAICM implementation. More needs to be done.

An important part of SAICM's significance lies in the fact that it reflects high-level agreement that the sound management of chemicals is *"essential if we are to achieve sustainable development including the eradication of poverty and disease, the improvement of human health and the environment and the elevation and maintenance of the standard of living in countries at all levels of development."*⁵ This link between chemical safety and sustainable development has not yet been fully reflected in the funding decisions of bilateral development assistance cooperation agencies, and it needs to be strengthened. Developing and transition countries need to do more to fully integrate SAICM objectives into national budgets and development assistance cooperation. Donors need to recognize and encourage the inclusion

of chemical safety objectives as important elements of aid cooperation in support of sustainable development.

SAICM financing remains insufficient and unsustainable. Possible donor interest in developing a new *Chemicals Management* focal area in the Global Environment Facility with additional funding is welcome, but there has not yet been a commitment to realize this. The resources that have been available through the Quick Start Programme (QSP) Trust Fund have been very modest and only one project per country has so far been permitted. Some countries have utilized the Quick Start Programme to finance SAICM activities, while others have not done so. Finally, since the Quick Start Programme is a time-limited program, there has been too little progress in the development of a more permanent funding mechanism to replace it.

Public awareness of chemical safety issues remains low. Inclusion of public stakeholders in relevant decision-making processes has been uneven. In some countries, there is good participation of all stakeholders; in others, information flow has been one way from government to other stakeholders; and in others there is little interaction between the government and public stakeholders. Some gaps in SAICM implementation include:

- Weak and unbalanced engagement of stakeholders in the development of chemicals management strategies at the national level, including NGOs, women's and children's advocacy groups, indigenous communities, trade unions, and grassroots social organizations;
- Need for more financial, technical and capacity support to public interest NGOs and CSOs to enable and facilitate their responsible and active participation in SAICM implementation;
- Insufficient human and technical capacity for implementing SAICM and monitoring results on the part of governments, domestic industries, and national NGOs, and CSOs;
- Low level of public awareness about SAICM and about chemical safety issues in general;
- Insufficient and unavailable information on chemical safety issues, including insufficient labeling and a lack of information about potentially hazardous chemicals in products, including electronic waste, nanomaterials, and production and use of asbestos-containing products;
- Insufficient research and promotion of alternatives to chemical pesticides in agriculture and health, including alternatives to the use of DDT for malaria control;
- Inadequate waste management, incineration of municipal, industrial, and medical waste, uncontrolled open burning of waste, and low implementation of zero waste approaches;
- Slow and non-transparent clean-up of contaminated sites and obsolete pesticides, continued accumulation of toxic waste;
- Lack of sufficient legislation to require producers and importers to improve the safety of their products, and insufficient political will or public demand to tighten control; inspection and vigilance of existing regulations; poorly regulated emissions of toxic chemicals;
- Lack of a permanent and sustainable SAICM financial mechanism including the internalization of costs;
- Absence in many countries of multi-stakeholder and inter-ministerial coordination committees;
- Insufficient commitment to basic principles such as the precautionary and polluter pays principles, no data, no market, public right to know, and progressive substitution of the most dangerous chemicals;
- Inadequate progress in the ratification and implementation of key chemical conventions such as the Stockholm Convention, Rotterdam Convention, and the Basel Convention, including the Ban Amendment.

Conclusion

The SAICM Global Outreach Campaign and parallel efforts have helped broaden the awareness of SAICM in all regions. More than 1,000 public interest NGOs and CSOs in more than 100 countries have pledged to help implement SAICM to achieve its objectives. NGOs and CSOs have implemented over 300 activities from the local to the international level to promote chemical safety. Over 70 national and regional Public Health Associations and schools of public health have taken note of SAICM and agreed to contribute to its implementation. International and national trade union federations are also encouraging their members to contribute to SAICM implementation. The *Common NGO/CSO Statement on SAICM* has been a very useful tool in these efforts.

Since 2006, SAICM implementation has advanced, but the pace has been slow and uneven. Overall, SAICM implementation needs a sustainable financial mechanism and strong links to sustainable development. In the SAICM Dubai Declaration, governments acknowledged that public health and environmental NGOs, trade unions and other civil society organizations have made important contributions to promoting chemical safety, and they stated their intent to engage actively in partnerships with civil society in SAICM implementation. This requires financial resources to build NGO capacity and to support SAICM activities so that the commitment of civil society to chemical safety can be harnessed to accomplish the 2020 goal.

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