



SAICM/OEWG.1/13

Distr.: General
16 September 2011



Original: English

**Open-ended Working Group of the International Conference
on Chemicals Management**

First meeting

Belgrade, 15–18 November 2011

Item 5 (c) of the provisional agenda*

**Implementation of the Strategic Approach:
new and emerging policy issues**

**Progress report on managing perfluorinated chemicals and the
transition to safer alternatives**

Note by the secretariat

1. The following report was submitted by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) pursuant to resolution II/5 of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.
2. The work described herein was carried out during the period since the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management. The establishment of a global group on perfluorinated chemicals (PFCs), as described herein, was initiated to enhance the implementation of resolution II/5, and to help facilitate the participation of all interested Governments, non-governmental organizations and stakeholders, especially those that are not OECD member countries.

I. Background

3. By its resolution II/5, the International Conference on Chemicals Management invited the other organizations participating in the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals in cooperation with OECD, as part of their mandate and work programme, together with Governments and other stakeholders to consider the development, facilitation and promotion in an open, transparent and inclusive manner of national and international stewardship programmes and regulatory approaches to reduce emissions and the content of relevant PFCs of concern in products and to work toward global elimination, where appropriate and technically feasible.
4. It encouraged Governments and other stakeholders participating in the stewardship programme to also work with the organizations participating in the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals in cooperation with OECD, to contribute to:
 - (a) Information-gathering activities, such as the recently developed OECD survey of product content and environmental release information on perfluorinated sulfonate (PFOS), perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA), their related substances and products and mixtures containing those substances;

* SAICM/OEWG.1/1/Rev.1.

(b) Information exchange on alternatives currently in use, including short-chain-length fluorocarbons, and potentially safer alternative substances or technologies for their use; on criteria for alternatives; on the necessity and possibility of technology transfer; on progress in and examples of regulatory actions and voluntary programmes; on monitoring; on emissions; on exposure; on environmental fate and transport; and on the potential effects of perfluorinated chemicals and alternatives on human health and the environment.

5. It noted that such work might contribute relevant information to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal and invited the stewardship programmes to submit a report on progress, consider comments, and invite further actions at the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group and the third session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.

6. At the forty-fourth OECD Joint Meeting of the Chemicals Committee and the Working Party on Chemicals, Pesticides and Biotechnology, held on 10 and 11 June 2009, the participants agreed that the OECD Steering Group on PFCs should work with the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals to encourage Governments and other stakeholders to participate in PFC risk reduction programmes; to contribute to the OECD survey of product content and environmental release information on PFOS, perfluorinated alkylated substances (PFAS), perfluorinated carboxylic acids (PFCA), their related substances and products or mixtures containing them; to exchange information on alternatives currently in use; and to report to the Open-ended Working Group at its first meeting and to the International Conference on Chemicals Management at its third session.

7. The tasks to be undertaken over the period 2010–2012 include:

- (a) PFC survey among major producers in 2011;
- (b) Information-sharing on alternative substances and technologies;
- (c) Promotion of stewardship and regulatory activities;
- (d) Establishment of a global PFC group;

(e) Reporting progress to the Open-ended Working Group at its first meeting and to the International Conference on Chemicals Management at its third session.

8. The present report describes progress under paragraphs (a)–(d) above.

II. PFC survey among major producers in 2011

9. A survey among major producers of PFCs was carried out in 2009 and the results published in 2011.¹ Whereas the previous two surveys (in 2004 and 2006) requested participating countries to collect information on all PFCs and their products manufactured in or imported into their jurisdictions, this survey focused on manufacturers of a defined list of chemicals and/or their products in OECD and non-OECD countries. The survey focused on PFAS with chain lengths of C6 and higher (including PFOS) and PFCA with chain lengths of C8 and higher (including PFOA) and potential precursors of carboxylic acids in fluorotelomer-based products. Of the companies surveyed, 55 per cent were from not OECD member countries. No responses were received from companies in those countries, however, highlighting the need for outreach activities to encourage companies in non-OECD countries to participate in the survey to allow an accurate estimation of the global environmental loading of these chemicals.

10. Consequently, at the Joint Meeting the participants recommended delaying the undertaking of the next PFC survey to 2012, in order to allow additional time for effective outreach to non-OECD producers.

III. PFC web portal

11. To facilitate information exchange, a PFC web portal and content have been developed by the PFC Steering Group. The portal was made available on the OECD website in August 2010 at www.oecd.org/ehs/pfc. Although the Steering Group's input has been exhausted, as it was felt that the portal needed further information to become a useful tool a letter was sent in August 2010 to the heads of delegation attending the Joint Meeting seeking additional input. This has not, however, generated as much

1 [www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/displaydocumentpdf?cote=env/jm/mono\(2011\)1&doclanguage=en](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/displaydocumentpdf?cote=env/jm/mono(2011)1&doclanguage=en).

information as was hoped. Further input from Joint Meeting and Strategic Approach members would therefore be highly welcome.

IV. PFC events

12. The PFC Steering Group decided to hold web-based seminars and side events at important gatherings to increase the dissemination of information about PFCs. The following events have taken place to date:

(a) *Web-based seminar on recent PFC-related activities, 27 October 2010*: This event allowed for information to be exchanged on recent regulatory initiatives and featured presentations of the PFC web portal and of recent activities in Japan, the United States of America and the European Union and by the Stockholm Convention and industry;

(b) *Web-based seminar on the 2009 PFC survey, 2 March 2011*: This event provided a presentation of the results of the 2009 PFC survey led by Australia, in addition to the perspectives of industry and the United States Environmental Protection Agency. A report was delivered on the key results of the survey about the use of PFCs and PFC products, in addition to releases of PFCs to the environment and off-site transfers. One of the findings of the survey was that few perfluorinated compounds were released to air or water systems compared to landfill or off-site transfer for incineration;

(c) *Web-based seminar on alternatives to long-chain PFCs, 18 April 2011*: This event was organized jointly by OECD and the Secretariat of the Stockholm Convention and brought together insights gleaned from work on alternatives to long-chain PFCs in both bodies. The event included presentations on guidelines on alternatives to PFOS-related substances developed by the Persistent Organic Pollutants Review Committee, on alternatives to PFCs more generally by the industry, on efforts on alternatives in the United States and on the management of PFCs in Japan;

(d) *Side event on PFCs at the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention on 28 April 2011 in Geneva*: This event saw a presentation of the new global PFC group currently being established (see below), the results of the 2009 PFC survey and recent regulatory and risk management activities in the United States. The last-mentioned in particular provided an up-to-date overview of United States Environmental Protection Agency's long-chain PFC action plan and current actions to address unreasonable risks posed by long-chain PFCs;

(e) *Brainstorming workshop in conjunction with the Asia-Pacific regional meeting of the Strategic Approach on 5 September 2011 in Beijing*: This workshop helped to lay the ground for a new PFC survey and to generate new ideas for additional activities, especially relating to the needs of developing countries.²

13. The United States provided the technical platform for the organization of the web-based seminars, which typically attracted between 20 and 40 experts, while some 100 people attended the side event at the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention. Another side event is scheduled to take place during the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group, following the same model.

V. Establishment of a global PFC group

14. To enhance and further the implementation of resolution II/5 and to help facilitate the participation of all interested Governments, non-governmental organizations and stakeholders, especially those that were not OECD member countries, at the Joint Meeting the participants recommended that the OECD PFC Steering Group should be replaced by a global PFC group. The new group will receive secretariat support from OECD and the Chemicals Branch of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) Division of Technology, Industry and Economics.

15. UNEP and the Strategic Approach secretariat sent letters to the Strategic Approach regional focal points requesting the nomination of experts to the group, which is being established. It is anticipated that the group will hold its first conference call in October 2011 to discuss the details of a work programme.

² See the summary record of the workshop at: www.oecd.org/document/33/0,3746,en_21571361_44787844_44799777_1_1_1_1,00.html.

16. A first draft of the group's terms of reference was discussed at the forty-sixth Joint Meeting, held from 16 to 18 November 2010. The PFC Steering Group, in cooperation with UNEP, has since revised these terms of reference, which are set out in the annex to the present report without formal editing.

VI. Possible action

17. The Open-ended Working Group is invited to take note of the information herein and to provide feedback on the terms of reference of the Global PFC Group, and in particular on proposed work for 2011–2012. The Working Group is also invited to submit nominations for members of the Global PFC Group.

Annex

Terms of reference of the global PFC group

Composition

1. The Global PFC Group would be an inclusive group, and would welcome up to 5 representatives from each of the SAICM regions, non-governmental organizations, and other international organizations, as well as current OECD participants on PFCs activities. The composition of the Group could be as follows:

Regional representatives

- [Africa]
- [Asia-Pacific]
- [Central and Eastern Europe]
- [Latin America and the Caribbean]
- [Western Europe and Others]

Non-Governmental Organizations

- [Health sector]
- [Industry sector]
- [Public interest sector]
- [Trade unions sector]

IOMC

- [IOMC representative]

Stockholm Secretariat

- [Stockholm Secretariat]

OECD

- [OECD country]
- [OECD stakeholder]

Global PFC Group Secretariat

- [UNEP Secretariat]
- [OECD Secretariat]

Objectives of the Global PFC Group

2. The aim of the Global PFC Group is to facilitate information exchange and information gathering:

- On the product content and environmental release information release information on perfluorinated sulfonate, perflouroctanoic acid, their related substances and products and mixtures containing these substances;
- On alternatives in uses and the potentially safer alternative substances of technologies for their uses;
- On criteria for alternatives;
- On the necessity and possibility of technology transfer;
- On progress in and examples of regulatory actions and voluntary programmes;
- On monitoring; on emissions;
- On exposure;
- On environmental fate and transport;

- On the potential effects of perfluorinated chemicals and alternatives on human health and the environment

Proposed work for 2011-2012

3. The following items for future work were discussed at the 46th Joint Meeting of the OECD Chemicals Committee and the Working Party on Chemicals, Pesticides and Biotechnology and are suggested as a basis for discussions in the Global PFC Group. The main elements that have been proposed include:

- i) PFC survey among major producers in 2012;
- ii) Information sharing on alternative substances and technologies through the PFC Web Portal, webinars and side-events;
- iii) Promotion of stewardship and regulatory activities through the PFC Web Portal, webinars and side-events; and
- iv) Reporting progress to OEWG and ICCM3.

4. These activities could be carried-out provided that sufficient voluntary contributions were made available.

5. It is foreseen that the Global PFC Group would work through conference calls and emails rather than face-to-face meetings. It should therefore be a group that requires limited resources to operate.

Governance structure

6. OECD and UNEP, Chemicals Branch will chair the teleconferences and carry-out the secretariat functions for the Global PFC Group.

7. The Global PFC group will at its first meeting discuss, eventually amend and adopt the terms of reference for the Global PFC group, as well as discuss and adopt a work programme.

8. The Secretariat will be responsible for:

- Organizing meetings of the Global PFC group;
- Consultation with SAICM Secretariat to ensure coordination of inputs for the International Conference on International Chemicals Management and the Open Ended Working Group;
- Consultation with other stakeholders outside the Global PFC Group;
- Preparation of progress reports to SAICM (Open Ended Working Group and International Conference on Chemicals Management).

9. The new group will receive secretarial support from OECD and UNEP's Chemicals Branch, and work together with the SAICM secretariat to request nominations from SAICM Regional Focal Points for the new group.