



**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**

Nominated new emerging policy issues

Note by the Secretariat

Executive summary

1. One of the functions of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, as set out in paragraph 24 (j) of the Overarching Policy Strategy of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, is to focus attention and call for appropriate action on emerging policy issues as they arise and to forge consensus on priorities for cooperative action.

2. At its second session, held in Geneva from 11 to 15 May 2009, the Conference adopted resolution II/4 on emerging policy issues. The annex to that resolution sets out modalities for considering emerging policy issues. The process is to be open and transparent, facilitated by the secretariat and provide for the participation of all stakeholders.

3. In accordance with the above-mentioned procedure, two issues have been nominated for consideration at the Conference's third session: international cooperation to promote awareness, understanding and action in respect of endocrine-disrupting chemicals; and environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants. The proposed actions for those issues can be summarized as follows:

(a) *International cooperation to promote awareness, understanding and action in respect of endocrine-disrupting chemicals:*

- (i) To provide up-to-date information and scientific expert advice to policymakers and others responsible for chemicals risk management to assist them in identifying and recommending potential measures that can contribute to reducing exposure to and the effects of endocrine-disrupting chemicals;
- (ii) To raise awareness and facilitate information exchange and networking;
- (iii) To provide international support to build capacity, in particular in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to assess issues pertaining to endocrine-disrupting chemicals;

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

- (iv) To create an international network of scientists, risk managers and others who are particularly involved in issues pertaining to endocrine-disrupting chemicals so as to facilitate information exchange, establish discussion forums and provide mutual support in research and advice on the translation of research results into action to control such chemicals;
- (b) *Environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants:*
 - (i) To disseminate information through the secretariat's clearing-house function or other mechanisms;
 - (ii) To make recommendations to the Conference, which could include requests for action directed to the governing bodies of international organizations, Governments, scientific bodies, civil-society stakeholders and the private sector;
 - (iii) To initiate follow-up work under the auspices of the Conference, including through intersessional work at regional meetings, workshops, training sessions, internet-based consultations and teleconferences, and work by subsidiary bodies, the secretariat or other mechanisms;
 - (iv) To encourage Governments, civil society, intergovernmental organizations and the private sector to make specific commitments, such as to international activities or partnerships;
 - (v) To consider, as appropriate, their relevance to the Global Plan of Action and the Overarching Policy Strategy or any other mechanism for capacity-building.

Possible action by the Open-ended Working Group

4. Each issue is proposed for consideration by the Open-ended Working Group, taking into account the current work on existing emerging policy issues and the need to complete that work, the limited resources currently available to the secretariat and the relevance of the issues to achieving the goal that by 2020 chemicals are used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment. The Open-ended Working Group may wish:

- (a) To review the two issues and consider possible cooperative actions on each issue as appropriate;
- (b) To propose one or both of the issues for inclusion on the provisional agenda of the third session of the Conference in accordance with the rules of procedure of the Conference;
- (c) To request the secretariat to prepare a summary of any issue included on the agenda for the third session, in cooperation with the proponent of the issue and taking into account any recommendations made by the Open-ended Working Group.

5. Should a nominated issue not be so included its proponent may seek other ways to focus attention on it, including:

- (a) Disseminating information about the issue through the secretariat's clearing-house function;
- (b) Including the issue as a topic for workshops or internet-based consultations;
- (c) Encouraging regional groups to discuss the issue at regional meetings;
- (d) Forwarding the issue to other forums or individual stakeholders with relevant mandates for their consideration;
- (e) Highlighting the issue as a possible priority for Strategic Approach participants;
- (f) Making Strategic Approach participants aware of any funding associated with the proposal that may be available for intersessional work, bilateral projects or other opportunities.

I. Background

6. At the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, held in Geneva from 11 to 15 May 2009, there was general agreement that any procedure for the nomination, review and prioritization of emerging policy issues should be open and transparent and should clearly establish how to deal with such issues, including their nomination, review and prioritization and proposed cooperative actions.

7. The Conference adopted resolution II/4 on emerging policy issues, the annex to which sets out modalities for considering emerging policy issues, emphasizing that the process to follow should be open and transparent, should be facilitated by the secretariat and should provide for the participation of all stakeholders. The process entails a call for the nomination of issues, the submission of initial information, an initial review and publication of submissions, prioritization of submissions and, eventually, the inclusion of selected issues on the provisional agenda of the Conference.

II. Process for consideration of nominated new emerging policy issues

8. An emerging policy issue is considered by the Conference to be an issue involving any phase in the life cycle of chemicals that, first, has not been generally recognized, has not been sufficiently addressed or arises from the current level of scientific information and, second, that may have significant adverse effects on human health and/or the environment.

9. Nominations of new emerging policy issues must be submitted at least 18 months in advance of the session of the Conference at which they will be considered. The deadline for the nomination of issues for consideration at the third session of the Conference was 30 November 2010. Initial information submitted in support of an issue should demonstrate why it should be considered to be an emerging policy issue and should include a description of proposed actions for making progress on the issue. Possible actions are suggested in paragraph 4 (b) of the annex to resolution II/4.

10. The secretariat has prepared guidance including details of the nomination procedures, a questionnaire to be used in nominating emerging policy issues and an overview of the steps to follow by the Conference in its consideration of emerging policy issues.

11. In nominating an emerging policy issue, a proponent is to complete a questionnaire that includes the criteria listed in paragraph 2 (b) of the annex to resolution II/4. This encompasses:

- (a) Magnitude of the problem and its impact on human health or the environment, taking into account vulnerable subpopulations and any toxicological and exposure data gaps;
- (b) Extent to which the issue is being addressed by other bodies, particularly at the international level, and how it is related to, complements, or does not duplicate such work;
- (c) Existing knowledge and perceived gaps in understanding about the issue;
- (d) Extent to which the issue is of a cross-cutting nature;
- (e) Information on the anticipated deliverables from action on the issue.

III. Nominated new emerging policy issues

12. Two issues have been nominated for consideration as new emerging policy issues at the third session of the Conference:

- (a) International cooperation to promote awareness, understanding and action in respect of endocrine-disrupting chemicals (nominated by the Chemicals Branch of the United Nations Environment Programme Division of Technology, Industry and Economics);
- (b) Environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants (nominated by the International Society of Doctors for the Environment).

13. Each proponent has completed a questionnaire on the issue that it has nominated, setting out why it should be considered to be an emerging policy issue. The questionnaire includes a short description of each issue, explaining how in the proponent's view it meets the definition of an emerging policy issue, and provides information meant to facilitate assessment of the issue against the criteria set out in paragraph 2

(b) of the annex to resolution II/4. Each submission also describes the proposed cooperative actions, or options for such actions, to be considered in moving forward on the nominated emerging issue, including a rationale for how the proposed actions would address the nominated issue.

14. The secretariat ensured that the nominations matched the agreed definition and criteria and Strategic Approach stakeholders were invited to submit comments on the nominations by 30 April 2011. Comments were received from three Governments (Madagascar, Mexico and the United States of America), one intergovernmental organization (the World Health Organization (WHO)) and one non-governmental organization (the International POPs Elimination Network), and posted on the Strategic Approach website at www.saicm.org.

15. On endocrine-disrupting chemicals, the comments received included the following suggestions:

(a) That the proposed cooperative action should be revised to reflect the outcomes of activities already in place, more recent scientific findings and the exchange of good examples in regulatory, research support and financial structures;

(b) That a link could be made between the proposal and the Overarching Policy Strategy;

(c) That the magnitude of the problem and its impact on children's vulnerability needed to be refined to reflect the particularities of their vulnerability more accurately;

(d) That consideration should be given to updating the global assessment of the state-of-the-science of endocrine disruptors prepared by an expert group on behalf of WHO and UNEP, which would contain updated information on human health issues (led by WHO), environmental issues (led by UNEP) and information about exposures (jointly led by both organizations).

16. On environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants, the comments received included the following suggestions:

(a) That the issue should be included as an emerging policy issue;

(b) That consideration should be given to the levels at which such pharmaceuticals occur in environmental media and to some of the less-known factors that the proposal discussed (e.g., cumulative effects of exposure to mixtures and unintended exposures of vulnerable or sensitive populations);

(c) That attention should be paid to the separate process for adding activities to the Global Plan of Action;

(d) That consideration should be given to a 2011 WHO technical report on pharmaceuticals in drinking water.

17. Two Governments commented in general on both proposals, one expressing support for further consideration by the Conference, the other advocating that, as resources were currently limited, it would be more appropriate to focus on continuing and completing work on existing emerging policy issues than to take up new ones.

18. The proponents reviewed the comments and revised the submissions as appropriate. Stakeholders discussed both nominated issues during Strategic Approach regional meetings held in 2011, and both were endorsed at the African and Latin American and Caribbean meetings. Stakeholders at the Central and Eastern European regional meeting reserved their position pending discussions with other constituencies, but said that they were not opposed in principle to discussing the issues at the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group and noted that endocrine-disrupting chemicals were of concern. Some said that priority should be accorded to follow-up work on the four emerging policy issues identified by the Conference at its second session. It was suggested that consideration of emerging policy issues was one of a number of important measures for Strategic Approach implementation and that new emerging issues should be selected with caution given the resource demands of other Strategic Approach initiatives.

19. Information on the two nominated new emerging policy issues will be provided at the technical briefing session to be held on Monday, 14 November 2011, immediately before the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group.

20. The final versions of the two submissions are available in document SAICM/OEWG.1/INF/9.