



Distr.: General
25 August 2011



Original: English

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

First meeting

Belgrade, 15–18 November 2011

Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

**Overview of activities under the Strategic Approach
to International Chemicals Management for the period 2009–2011**

Report on regional activities for the period 2009–2011

Note by the Secretariat

Background

1. By its resolution II/2, the International Conference on Chemicals Management called upon Governments and organizations in a position to do so to provide financial and in kind resources to enable at least one meeting for each of the five United Nations regions to be organized in the intersessional period between the second and third sessions of the Conference and requested the secretariat, within available resources, to assist in regional coordination through the provision of teleconference services, use of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management website and other relevant measures.
2. The Conference underlined the important role of regional meetings and coordination mechanisms in enabling stakeholders in each region to exchange experiences and identify priority needs in relation to the implementation of the Strategic Approach and to develop regional positions on key issues. The Conference encouraged regions and subregions, where appropriate, to identify common priorities, develop Strategic Approach regional implementation plans and consider regional or subregional approaches and projects, including projects which might be supported under the Quick Start Programme, and also encouraged regional networks to discuss the further development and implementation of the Strategic Approach, including new emerging policy issues.
3. Paragraph 26 of the Overarching Policy Strategy of the Strategic Approach states that “it will be essential that implementation of the Strategic Approach continue effectively between sessions of the Conference, building on its open, multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral methods”. The Strategy recognizes that regional meetings played a significant role in the development of the Strategic Approach, and that it will be important to build on this commitment and expertise, taking into account the needs of developing countries, in particular the least developed among them, countries with economies in transition and developed countries. The Strategy envisages that regional meetings will facilitate input on Strategic Approach activities, preparation for future meetings of the Conference and exchange of regional expertise and information. Functions of the regional meetings anticipated by the Strategy are to review progress in the implementation of the Strategic Approach within the regions, to provide guidance on implementation to all stakeholders at the regional level and to enable technical and strategic discussions and exchange of information to take place.

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

I. Meetings held

4. During the intersessional period to date, a number of regional meetings on the Strategic Approach have been held. They are listed below. The symbol of the report of the meeting, when prepared, is given in parentheses.

First round (2009–2010):

- (a) Second Asia-Pacific meeting, Beijing, 23–27 November 2009 (SAICM/RM/AP.2/2);
- (b) Third Central and Eastern European meeting, Lodz, Poland, 7–11 December 2009 (SAICM/RM/CEE.3/2);
- (c) Third African meeting, Abidjan, Côte d’Ivoire, 28 and 29 January 2010 (SAICM/RM/AF.3/4);
- (d) Second Latin American and Caribbean meeting, Kingston, 8–13 March 2010 (SAICM/RM/LAC.2/3);
- (e) Fourth meeting of the European Union and JUSSCANZ¹ countries, Paris, 18 and 19 November 2010 (SAICM/EUJ.4/5).

Second round (2011):

- (a) Fourth African meeting, Nairobi, 5, 7 and 8 April 2011 (SAICM/RM/AF.4/4);
- (b) Third Latin American and Caribbean meeting, Panama City, 30 May–3 June 2011 (SAICM/RM/LAC.3/3);
- (c) Fourth Central and Eastern European meeting, Lodz, 27–29 June 2011 (SAICM/RM/CEE.4/2);
- (d) Third Asia-Pacific meeting, Beijing, 5–9 September 2011 (SAICM/RM/AP.3/4).

Coordinating mechanisms:

- (a) The African core group met in Nairobi on 20 and 21 August 2009 (SAICM/ACG.4/2) and in the margins of the third African regional meeting in Abidjan on 28 and 29 January 2010 (SAICM/ACG.5/2). It also held two teleconferences, on 13 August 2010 and 10 January 2011;
- (b) The Latin American and Caribbean regional coordinating committee met in Santiago on 15 and 16 November 2009 (SAICM/LACRCC.2/3) and in the margins of the second and third regional meetings in March 2010 (SAICM/LACRCC.3/2) and June 2011;
- (c) The Central and Eastern European regional coordination group met in Brno, Czech Republic, on 6 September 2009 (SAICM/CEERCG.1/3) and in the margins of the third Central and Eastern European regional meeting in December 2009.

5. At the subregional level, Arab countries met for an informal consultation in Alexandria, Egypt, on 14 April 2010.

6. The reports of the regional meetings listed above are available on the Strategic Approach website, www.saicm.org.

II. Outcomes of the regional meetings

7. At all the regional meetings information was exchanged on progress in implementing the Strategic Approach, reporting, the health sector strategy, emerging policy issues, financial considerations and the Quick Start Programme.

8. Ahead of the eighteenth session of the Commission on Sustainable Development, at relevant regional meetings regional focal points, working with regional economic commissions, were mandated to participate in the Commission’s regional implementation meetings. They subsequently provided information at the regional meetings about the results of that participation.

9. Following substantive discussions during the meetings, a number of resolutions were adopted or agreed to on various issues, as described in the following paragraphs. The text of the resolutions can be found in the relevant meeting reports, as indicated in paragraph 4.

¹ The core members of the group known as “JUSSCANNZ” are the Governments of Japan, the United States of America, Switzerland, Canada, Australia, Norway and New Zealand.

A. Africa

10. At the third African regional meeting recommendations were adopted on hazardous substances in the life cycle of electrical and electronic products, nanotechnology and manufactured nanomaterials, and illegal traffic in toxic and dangerous products. A regional statement on the engagement of the health sector in Strategic Approach implementation was also developed. The participants also agreed to revise the African Core Group's composition, procedures and terms of reference.

11. At its fifth meeting the African Core Group reviewed the recommendations made at the third African regional meeting and developed a summary of progress on possible regional priorities identified in 2006. It also reviewed its workplan.

12. At the fourth African regional meeting resolutions and recommendations were adopted on financial considerations, the addition of activities on nanotechnologies and manufactured nanomaterials to the Global Plan of Action of the Strategic Approach, elimination of lead in paints, illegal traffic in toxic and dangerous products, and hazardous substances within the life cycle of electrical and electronic products. There was also substantial discussion of the need to update the African regional implementation plan and collectively develop regional project proposals.

B. Asia-Pacific

13. At the second Asia-Pacific regional meeting a recommendation was adopted on hazardous substances in the life cycle of electrical and electronic products. In addition, the terms of reference of the Asia-Pacific regional coordination group were agreed upon and the countries of the region allocated into six subregions.

14. At the informal consultation of the Arab region in April 2010 the participants discussed progress on institutional and policy matters and accepted a statement from non-governmental organizations participating in the informal consultation.

15. At the third Asia-Pacific regional meeting a regional coordination committee was established with a mandate derived from the terms of reference developed at the second meeting and comprising representatives of countries disaggregated geographically as agreed at the same meeting.

C. Latin America and the Caribbean

16. At the second Latin American and Caribbean meeting the participants agreed upon recommendations on strengthening the health sector, nanotechnology and manufactured nanomaterials, hazardous substances in the life cycle of electrical and electronic products and financing the implementation of the Strategic Approach. They also agreed to develop a regional implementation plan.

17. At its second meeting the regional coordination committee reviewed its workplan and its terms of reference, and at its third meeting, its workplan and the priorities established for the region.

18. At the third Latin American and Caribbean regional meeting the participants adopted resolutions on nanotechnologies and manufactured nanomaterials, financial considerations, hazardous substances in the life cycle of electrical and electronic products, the health sector strategy and lead in paint. They also reviewed progress in finalizing the regional implementation plan, work on which had been facilitated by the secretariat through a consultant.

D. Central and Eastern Europe

19. At the third Central and Eastern European regional meeting the participants adopted recommendations on hazardous substances in the life cycle of electrical and electronic products and agreed upon the workplan and terms of reference of the regional coordination group as developed at that group's first meeting.

20. While no resolutions were adopted, the participants agreed that further discussions should take place at the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group on proposals or recommendations on nanotechnologies and manufactured nanomaterials, financial considerations, hazardous substances in the lifecycle of electrical and electronic products, the health sector strategy and lead in paint.

III. Associated workshops and side events

21. The regional meetings were scheduled back-to-back with relevant technical workshops and consultations. Raising awareness of the emerging policy issue of nanotechnology and manufactured nanomaterials was an important aspect of all meetings, and was carried out in cooperation with the

United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. Other events related to the continuing negotiations to prepare a global legally binding instrument on mercury and to strengthening industrial chemicals management were organized in cooperation with the Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

22. In addition to the workshops, numerous other side events and information sessions were organized during the regional meetings by Governments, international and non-governmental organizations and regional bodies. During the second round of meetings, side events were held on work on two emerging policy issues: lead in paint (organized by UNEP and WHO) and chemicals in products (organized by UNEP). The third Asian and Pacific regional meeting was preceded by a one-day workshop on perfluorinated chemicals organized jointly by UNEP and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, on 5 September 2011. The combination of the regional meetings with workshops, policy consultations and side events follows on from a similar series of meetings organized during the period between the first and second sessions of the Conference and was designed to maximize the benefits from the resources invested in the regional meetings.

IV. Conclusions

23. All the regional meetings were well attended by government representatives and representatives of stakeholders from multiple sectors. The participants lauded the Quick Start Programme and the many projects carried out under its auspices that had assisted countries to initiate or further develop their chemicals management programmes, calling for the Programme to be replaced or renewed once the initial Trust Fund had expired. They also voiced their concern regarding the current financial situation, both in terms of implementing the Strategic Approach and of ensuring that the Secretariat enjoyed the means to carry out its assigned tasks. They called for renewed commitment from donors, including new and non-traditional donors, to using the Strategic Approach to help attain the 2020 chemicals goal of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development.

24. The participants looked forward to the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group as a means of further discussing new emerging policy issues, including new nominations, proposed additions to the Global Plan of Action and the health sector strategy. With regard to nominations for new emerging policy issues, some participants advocated caution, so as to ensure that current resources were not diverted to tackle new issues when activities on existing issues had yet to be completed, including the overall implementation of the Global Plan of Action. Participants from all regions commended the progress made on the issues of chemicals in products and lead in paint.

25. Regional coordinating mechanisms have been established by three of the five United Nations regions. The JUSSCANNZ group had previously agreed that it did not require such a mechanism.

26. Financial and in kind contributions were received from the following Governments and organizations to make the regional meetings possible: the Governments of Chile, China, Côte d'Ivoire, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Germany, Kenya, Jamaica, Norway, Panama, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States of America; the participating organizations of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals; and the League of Arab States. The leadership of the Strategic Approach regional focal points was crucial in organizing and ensuring the success of the regional meetings.

27. The Secretariat welcomes its close cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research. Without its assistance, the second round of regional meetings could not have been held. Such cooperation demonstrates the collaboration and synergies between entities of the United Nations system and has been vital in ensuring an optimum use of scarce resources.

28. The Open-ended Working Group may wish to take note of the information set out in the present report.