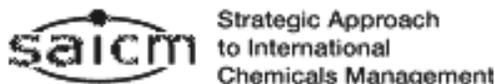




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**Open-ended Working Group of the International Conference
on Chemicals Management**

First meeting

Belgrade, 15–18 November 2011

Item 7 of the provisional agenda*

Preparations for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

Sound management of chemical within the context of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development: key messages for the Implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management

Note by the Secretariat

I. Background

1. The United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, commonly known as the “Rio plus 20” Conference, is being organized in pursuance of General Assembly Resolution 64/236 (A/RES/64/236) and will take place in Brazil from 20 to 22 June 2012¹, to mark the 20th anniversary of the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and the 10th anniversary of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development. It is envisaged as a Conference at the highest possible level, including Heads of State and Government or other representatives. The Conference will result in a focused political document.

2. In a decision adopted at the 2nd Preparatory Committee meeting in New York, (March 7 and 8, 2011), the United Nations and the Bureau of the Conference² invited all stakeholders, - governments, intergovernmental agencies and civil society including the major groups, to contribute inputs to a working document which will be the basis for the outcome document of the Conference. Such contributions were to be sent to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN

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

¹ The dates have recently been changed from 4 to 6 June 2012 to 20 to 22 June 2012.

² The Bureau for the conference runs the process leading up to the conference, and has been selected according to the UN General Assembly resolution calling for the 2012 conference. The Bureau is made up of the following countries: The African Group: Egypt and Botswana; The Asian Group: Pakistan and South Korea; GRULAC (Latin American and Caribbean Group): Argentina and Barbuda; CEIT (Countries with Economies in Transition): Croatia and the Czech Republic; WEOG (Western European and Others Group): the US (first half of the period) Canada (second half of the period) and Italy; ex officio: Brazil. ³ The Major Groups (MGs) are defined by Agenda 21 and is the way in which civil society is formally understood in this process. The MGs are: Women, Children and Youth, Farmers, Indigenous Peoples, NGOs, Trade Unions, Local Authorities, Science and Technology, Business and Industry. Each of the MG has a designated Organizing Partner, responsible for logistics, process etc.

DESA) secretariat by the first of November of 2011. Inputs are being compiled into a working document known as the Zero draft of the Outcome Document.

3. This report has been prepared in response to a request of the Bureau of the International Conference on Chemicals Management at its second intersessional face-to-face meeting held in Ljubljana in June 2011. At that meeting, participants were concerned that sound chemicals management had not featured more prominently in the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development given its relevance both for the green economy and international environment governance. It was suggested that a number of further actions might be pursued to raise awareness of the linkage between the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and sustainable development in the national, regional and global preparatory processes for the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in order to give better recognition of the achievements made to date, and to help strengthen commitment to the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management in future years.

II. Objective and themes

4. The objective of the Conference as set out in the General Assembly resolution A/RES/64/236 is to secure renewed political commitment for sustainable development, assess the progress to date and the remaining gaps in the implementation of the outcomes of the major summits on sustainable development, and address new and emerging challenges.

5. The Conference will focus on two themes: green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication, and the institutional framework for sustainable development or as it is also known, international environmental governance.

6. Although the main focus that has dominated the discussions up to now is the major themes of green economy and governance, the three objectives of the Conference contain important aspects of the content that may provide opportunities for input reflecting the sustainable development issues the world has to face today and in the future.

III. Process – The Road Map to Rio

7. A Road map was set out that includes a series of meetings organized to prepare and discuss inputs into the Zero draft document which includes three Preparatory and Intersessional Meetings at the global level together with 5 regional meetings. Table I below includes some of these meetings starting with the Regional Preparatory Meeting for the ECE Region in December 2011.

Table I – Road Map to Rio: December 2011-June 2011

MEETING	DATES
2011	
Regional Preparatory Meeting for the ECE region, ECE	1 Dec 2011 - 2 Dec 2011
Second Intersessional Meeting	15 – 16 December 2011
2012	
Initial discussions on the zero draft of outcome document	16 – 18 January 2012
Negotiations (informal informals) on the zero draft	13 – 17 February 2012
Negotiations (informal informals) on the zero draft	19 – 23 March 2012
Third Intersessional Meeting	26 – 27 March 2012
Negotiations (informal informals) on the zero draft	30 April – 4 May 2012
Third Preparatory Committee Meeting	28 – 30 May 2012

8. The overall objective of the regional preparatory process is to provide guidance and to facilitate consultations in order to ensure the coordination of the regions preparations for the Conference in an effective and efficient manner. The intent is to arrive at a consensus on the key sustainable development concerns and priorities for each region, to effectively articulate them and to ensure that they are adequately reflected in the Conference outcomes.

9. The discussions at the 1st and 2nd Intersessional Meeting are based on reports summarizing inputs by stakeholders. The first report was discussed back in January 2011 and the second report will be based on contributions received from Governments, IGO's and other stakeholders before 1 November 2011.

10. The above mentioned contributions are expected to address the following questions:

1. What are the expectations for the outcome of Rio+20, and what are the concrete proposals in this regard, including views on a possible structure of the Outcome document?
2. What are the comments, if any, on existing proposals: e.g., a green economy roadmap, framework for action, sustainable development goals, a revitalized global partnership for sustainable development, or others?
3. What are the views on implementation and on how to close the implementation gap, which relevant actors are envisaged as being involved (Governments, specific Major Groups, UN system, IFIs, etc.);
4. What specific cooperation mechanisms, partnership arrangements or other implementation tools are envisaged and what is the relevant time frame for the proposed decisions to be reached and actions to be implemented?

11. The summary of the contributions will be discussed at the 2nd intersessional meeting in December 2012 and based on the discussions, the zero draft outcome document will be developed. This zero draft outcome document will be the basis for the discussions and negotiations in 2012 up to the conference in June 2012.

IV. Chemicals and Sustainable Development

12. Chemicals are an integral part of everyday life with over 100,000 different substances in use. Industries producing and using these substances have an enormous impact on employment, trade and economic growth worldwide. There is hardly any industry where chemical substances are not implicated and there is no single economic sector where chemicals do not play an important role. However, besides the benefits from chemicals it is increasingly recognized that they also have the potential to adversely impact human health and the environment if not managed properly. The health related effects range from acute poisoning to long term effects, such as cancers, birth defects, neurological disorders, and hormone-disruption.

13. Environmental effects range from effects on sensitive species / ecosystems, to large scale issues such as eutrophication of water bodies and stratospheric ozone depletion. Chemicals contamination is wide spread both on land and in water. People are exposed through occupational activities as well as in daily life through intake of contaminated drinking water, ingestion of contaminated food (e.g. fish contaminated with mercury, DDT and/or PCBs), inhalation of polluted air (outdoor as well as indoor), and through direct skin contact.

14. The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, 1992 in particular the Chapter 19 of Agenda 21 defined the main areas of importance for sound management of chemicals and was through that a groundbreaking event that has influenced activities related to chemicals management at the global, regional and national level since then.

15. The World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg 2002 renewed in paragraph 23 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation the commitment to sound management of chemicals and set an ambitious goal aiming to achieve by 2020, that chemicals are being produced and used in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment.

16. The achievement of the 2020 goal has at the global level been implemented in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, adopted in Dubai in 2006. The Strategic Approach provides a voluntary, non-legally binding and cross-sectoral international framework for sound management of chemicals.

V. Progress in implementation of chemicals into sustainable development.

17. The Strategic Approach recognized the link between sustainable development and the sound management of chemicals and underlined in the Dubai Declaration 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.”

18. Significant but still insufficient progress, since the adoption of the Strategic Approach, has been made in chemicals management and regulations at the national, regional and international level. Serious incidents still occur and there are still negative impacts on both human health and the environment. Much remains to be done to achieve the 2020 goal on sound management of chemicals and to achieve the incorporation of chemicals management in the sustainable development agenda.

VI. United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development and the Link to Chemicals Management

19. Chemicals management is relevant for the themes of the Conference on green economy and the institutional infrastructures for sustainable development, as chemicals form an important element of the different economic sectors including industry, agriculture, mining and households.

20. The United Nations conference on Sustainable Development provides a possibility to take stock of the status for incorporation of sound management of chemicals into the sustainable development policies and to assess the barriers for achieving the 2020 goal together with guidance on possible goals for sound management of chemicals beyond 2020. The Conference should renew the commitment to sound management of chemicals as expressed in 1992, 2002 and imbedded in the principles of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management.

21. The Conference should also further develop the 2020 goal based on the experiences gained so far in implementation of the Strategic Approach and the chemicals related Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

22. Even though chemicals were an important element at the original Rio conference and figured prominently during the 1992 World Summit on Sustainable Development with the 2020 goal, chemicals have not been identified as a high priority area in preparation of the Rio+20 and the associated documents so far. The outcome document is not known at the time of drafting the present note. However, it is expected that chemicals will have been mentioned in the contributions, most likely with respect to the gaps in implementation of previous summits. If this is the case, the 2nd intersessional meeting will be crucial in ensuring that chemicals is given sufficient attention so that it will be included in the zero draft outcome document that will be developed based on the discussions at the intersessional meeting. The responsibility for this to happen lies clearly with the participating governments in the 2nd intersessional meeting.

Green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication

23. The concept of green economy focuses primarily on the interaction between environment and economy. Prior to the 1992 Rio Conference, the predominant idea was one of trade-offs between economic and environmental goals. The Conference was a major step towards recognizing the importance of synergies between the two issues as opposed to business as usual, which was both costly and unsustainable in the long term. Sustainable development emphasizes strong economic performance alongside resource efficiency, low carbon output and benefit to all peoples at all levels. It promotes jobs that reduce consumption of energy and raw materials, avoid greenhouse gas emissions, minimize waste and pollution and restore and protect ecosystems. It rests on integration and a balanced consideration of social, economic and environmental goals and objectives in both public and private decision-making.

International environmental governance/Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development

24. The proliferation of multilateral environmental agreements and fragmentation of environmental institutions has driven calls to strengthen the environmental pillar of sustainable development. A number of processes have addressed the scope and options for reform of international environmental governance. Issues considered include strengthening the science-policy interface with the full and meaningful participation of developing countries and countries with economies in transition and encouraging synergies between compatible multilateral environmental agreements. Institutional, or form-related questions make up the other part of the international environmental governance discussions.

VII. Expected Outcomes of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development

25. As the Rio plus 20 Conference has been conceived at a high political level, the outcome document is expected to be a focused political document. Accordingly, chemicals are not expected to receive more than a few lines in the outcome document and final decision, recognizing the importance of chemicals as an integral part of sustainable development that could serve as a catalyst for further actions up to 2020 and beyond.

26. It is important to keep in mind that for contributions to the outcome document to be successful, it is highly important to clearly articulate how the sound management of chemicals is connected to the objectives and themes of the Conference. As stakeholders of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, our task as well as our challenge is to be strategic and clearly articulate these relevant connections.
