



Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)

Distr.
General

SAICM/PREPCOM.2/INF/26
5 October 2004

Arabic, English, French and Spanish only

**Preparatory Committee for the
Development of a Strategic Approach
to International Chemicals Management**
Second session
Nairobi, 4–8 October 2004
Agenda item 3

**Further development of a strategic approach to
international chemicals management**

Principals to be operationalised within the plan of action and concrete measures

Attached is a submission by the International POPs Elimination Network.

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The International POPS Elimination Network (IPEN) asks participants to consider the following, which should be included as principals and operationalised within the plan of action and concrete measures.

IPEN welcomes the decision by governments to adopt a strategic approach to international chemicals management (SAICM). We understand the SAICM process as a global, intergovernmental effort, with full stakeholder participation, aimed at achieving by the year 2020 a toxics free future where food, water, and air no longer contain chemical pollutants that harm human health and the environment; and where workers and communities are no longer injured by occupational or community exposure to chemicals.

NGOs participating in the IPEN network are already active in global, regional, national, and local activities that support effective chemical safety policies and their implementation. We are committed to collaborating with like-minded governments and others in working for the adoption of a SAICM that provides an adequate basis for a successful, long-term global effort to protect health and the environment from injury caused by chemicals throughout their life cycles. In this paper, we identify 12 essential elements needed for SAICM to succeed, explain why SAICM is a critical part of the sustainable development agenda, and call for the establishment of an intergovernmental arrangement to ensure that the SAICM process continues to the realization of its 2020 goal, as agreed in the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

SAICM ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

For SAICM to succeed, it must contain the following essential elements:¹

1. Beginning immediately, and at the latest by 2020, the phase-out of production and use of chemicals that are persistent or bio-accumulative, or that are carcinogenic, mutagenic, toxic to reproduction or endocrine disruptors, or are of equivalent concern.
2. The cessation of all releases (gaseous, liquid or solid; deliberate or accidental) and losses of these chemicals to the environment by the year 2020.
3. The precautionary principle, under which preventive measures are to be taken when there are reasonable grounds for concern, even when the evidence is inconclusive of a causal relationship between an activity and its effects.
4. Default right-to-know that encompasses full information about all chemicals, including chemicals in products, data on their intrinsic properties and their effects on human health and environment, and information on their alternatives.
5. The substitution principle ensuring that hazardous chemicals, products and processes are replaced with safe alternatives, building upon the Stockholm Convention.
6. The “polluter pays” principle, which requires that the costs of all impacts on human health, society, and environment caused by the production and use of chemicals are internalised.
7. An effective approach for ensuring corporate liability and compensation, particularly in identifying and holding appropriate parties responsible for damage to human health and the environment.
8. Full public participation, where public interest organizations work together with governments to ensure a transparent multi-stakeholder approach, and where capacity building and other mechanisms are instituted to ensure relevance at the grassroots level.
9. Technical and financial assistance for capacity building, to ensure a just transition where polluting practices and technologies are phased out while building a sustainable economy by phasing in clean production and ensuring

¹ As contained in the IPEN Bangkok SAICM Statement, adopted by the IPEN General Assembly, Bangkok, Nov. 2003.

clean technology transfer. Special attention should be made to protect children, workers, peasants and communities, and the needs of developing countries and economies in transition.

10. Waste reduction at source and other waste issues, which require full consideration of cradle to cradle and cradle to grave fate of chemicals in production and at the end of the useful life of products in which they are present.²
11. Compliance mechanisms to ensure effective global implementation.
12. Further development of monitoring, measuring and validation programs, to assess releases at source (stacks, discharge pipes, transfer of pollutants, etc.) and background levels in all environmental media and biota, as a means to establish a review and implementation mechanism that ensures that the objective is reached by 2020.

SAICM is a Critical Part of the Development Agenda

A successful SAICM must provide a framework for the full and appropriate integration of chemical safety objectives into sustainable development and poverty reduction programs. SAICM is especially important to developing countries and countries with economies in transition, because many of these countries cannot rely solely on their own national capacities and resources to advance toward chemical safety.

At their tenth Ministerial Conference in June, African Ministers of Environment noted “the link between poverty and vulnerability to toxic chemicals” and stressed “the urgent need to promote the integration of the environmental dimension into poverty reduction strategies.” The Sirte Declaration on the Environment for Development, adopted by the Ministers, emphasizes “the inextricable linkages between environmental management, poverty eradication and sustainable development.” The Ministers further resolved to commit themselves to “prioritizing and drawing synergies from the issue of chemical management, the strategic approach to international chemicals management (SAICM) process, environmental impact assessment, the phasing out of leaded gasoline, sustainable human settlements, post-conflict environment assessment, health and environment and disaster risk management.”

Many developing countries and countries with economies in transition face the same or similar circumstances as those identified by the African Ministers. SAICM must provide a catalyst for these countries to address their sustainable development and poverty reduction needs, through increased coordination and assistance at the international level, and renewed political will and coordination at the domestic level.

Developing countries and countries with economies in transition will require active assistance from relevant intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), bi-lateral and multi-lateral aid agencies, and other development institutions. However, each of the IGOs faces many demands on its limited attention and resources. Therefore, if SAICM is to succeed, the governing bodies of all the IGOs now participating on the SAICM Steering Committee,³ and others, must formally endorse SAICM after it is adopted. Furthermore, it will be essential that each of these governing bodies decides that chemical safety is an important component of their organization’s work, and that they will fully integrate activities in support of chemical safety into their plans and budgets, with special emphasis on those measures identified in the SAICM.

However, successful mobilization of intergovernmental resources, assistance, and attention in support of SAICM objectives will not be enough. The prime responsibility for advancing toward SAICM goals remains with each individual country. Governments of all countries will need to give higher priority to advancing chemical safety goals. All relevant ministries and agencies – environment, health, agriculture, labor, industry, development, and others – will need to dedicate themselves toward achieving SAICM objectives and making their own appropriate contributions, and then to coordinate among themselves through an effective interagency/inter-ministerial coordinating mechanism.

² The term “chemical” encompasses all products of the chemical industry. Among these are polymers, adhesives, sealants, dyes, additives, pesticides and others present in many manufactured products and materials. These constitute a big fraction of solid waste in many countries. Therefore, the “life-cycle” approach requires SAICM to address proper management of not only hazardous wastes, but also of all solid wastes.

³ Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS), Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), International Labor Organization (ILO), World Health Organization (WHO) and World Bank.

Finally, developing country governments will need to fully integrate chemical safety into their Country Assistance Strategies (CAS), their Poverty Reduction Strategies (PRS), and the other programs and documents that reflect their prioritization of development assistance needs.

The International Conference on Chemical Management Must Be the Start of an Ongoing Intergovernmental Effort

The adoption of SAICM documents, and their endorsement by IGOs, must not be the end of the SAICM process. Instead, they should be the start of an ongoing intergovernmental effort that will continue to the year 2020 (and possibly beyond). This will require the establishment of an intergovernmental arrangement with a mandate to provide analysis and to report on the progress of governments, international organizations, and intergovernmental bodies toward implementing the SAICM. Such an arrangement must include mechanisms for formulating advice, guidance, recommendations, and course corrections that will help keep SAICM on track toward its 2020 goals.

Because the SAICM should implicate and involve a broad range of sectors, such as environment, public health, labor, development, agriculture, etc., the required arrangement should not be perceived as subordinate to any one IGO. Rather, the arrangement should relate independently to all relevant IGOs, serving as an umbrella under which all national ministries and agencies that share responsibility for chemical safety can be comfortably accommodated. The arrangement must provide a framework to facilitate and encourage full and effective cooperation by IGOs with responsibilities in the field of chemical safety. Additionally, the arrangement will need to encourage and facilitate full and effective participation by all the stakeholder groups necessary for SAICM success, including public interest NGOs; labor, academic, and industry trade associations; and others.

The Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) and the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) both provide useful models. Both were established following the 1992 Rio Summit to facilitate implementation of Chapter 19 of Agenda 21. As provided under the WSSD Plan of Action, SAICM will update Chapter 19. A good way forward may be to merge IFCS and IOMC and provide them with updated terms of reference that take into account what has worked well and what has worked poorly over more than a decade of experience.
