

**Sub-Committee of Experts
on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification
and Labelling of Chemicals
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Activities of the UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme and the UNITAR/ILO/OECD WSSD Global GHS Partnership

Transmitted by UNITAR

1. This document provides an update regarding the activities in the UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme and the UNITAR/ILO/OECD WSSD Global GHS Partnership (July – December 2003).

UNITAR/ILO Capacity Building Programme Activities

Country-based Activities

2. The two pilot countries, Zambia and South Africa, continue their work on developing national chemical hazard communication and GHS implementation strategies.
3. In Zambia, an executive regulatory process is underway, designed to identify and adopt provisions to ensure GHS implementation across all sectors. Zambia has finalized its action plan and started to implement a number of priority activities – such as introducing a national chemical safety day, certificate-based training program and customs training – before the end of 2003.
4. In South Africa, the study for implementing the GHS and developing a national implementation strategy is now complete. The final phase of the project developed a strategy outlining the purpose, scope and aims for GHS implementation in South Africa. It also proposed legislative, institutional, training, awareness raising and technical infrastructure goals, as well as resource requirements. It is expected that the report will be forwarded to Government for implementation and that the development of the technical standard (the basis for implementing a legally binding approach to GHS implementation) will begin in February 2004.
5. The UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme Advisory Group (PAG) continues to meet to review programme documents, ensure complementarity with other chemical hazard communication initiatives and provide overall guidance regarding Programme implementation.

Regional Activities

6. The first in a series of regional and sub-regional GHS awareness raising workshops was held for countries of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region in Livingstone, Zambia, from 1 to 4 September 2003. The event brought together over forty representatives from SADC governments, industry and labour organizations, international organizations and GHS resource persons. The workshop was supported by GTZ, UNITAR (with resources provided by the Governments of Switzerland and The Netherlands), IFCS and the ICCA. One of the key outcomes was a commitment to initiate the development of a regional strategy with the goal to ensure SADC-wide harmonization of GHS implementation by 2007. Complimentary to this workshop, a regional GHS needs assessment and implementation report is being prepared as a basis to further inform the development of the regional strategy.

Development of Guidance and Training Materials

7. A GHS E-learning training package, targeted at developing and transition countries and taking a modular approach to key topics related to capacity building for GHS implementation, is now under development. Pilot testing is scheduled to take place in 2004.

Supporting Services

8. A side event entitled “The Globally Harmonized System for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals: Opportunities and Challenges”, was held on the evening of Sunday, 2 November 2003, at Forum IV. The workshop was co-sponsored by UNECE, UNITAR, IFCS, GTZ, Health Canada, US OSHA, the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, ICCA and the Society for Chemical Hazard Communication. Over 250 participants were provided with an opportunity to learn about the new system and discuss key issues regarding GHS implementation. Presentations and discussions included the perspectives of governments, industry, labour and international organizations. Based on initial discussions at the side event, and subsequent deliberations during Forum IV, the IFCS adopted a GHS Action Plan which recognised the importance of GHS implementation and recommended a number of implementation and capacity building-related activities.
9. The interactive GHS Partnership website and virtual capacity building library (also in CD ROM format) is now online.

WSSD Global Partnership for Capacity Building to Implement the GHS

10. At the First Meeting of Partners in July 2003, representatives from 16 governments, 8 intergovernmental organizations and 12 NGOs agreed to the proposed workplan and suggested activities as the framework for the Partnership.

The Partnership framework workplan is structured around four programme areas:

- (1) GHS Capacity Development at the Regional Level
- (2) GHS Capacity Development at the National Level
- (3) Development of GHS Awareness Raising, Capacity Building Guidance and Training Materials

(4) Supporting Activities and Services for GHS Capacity Development

Activities constitute a contribution to the GHS Partnership if they fall within the framework workplan. Activities are either implemented through the UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme or directly by Partners. In all cases, activities should be co-ordinated through, and technically reviewed by, the Programme Advisory Group (PAG) of the UNITAR/ILO GHS Programme. It is recognized that other valuable GHS activities are implemented independently of the GHS Partnership. Those activities do not belong to the core program of the Partnership, but are referred to in a dedicated section of the Annual Partnership Report and are listed in the relevant sections of the Events page of the Partnership website. The 2002 Annual Report and the report of the Partners meeting are available from UNITAR.

Resource Considerations

11. GHS capacity building activities organized by UNITAR/ILO are funded by extra-budgetary resources. UNITAR would in particular like to thank the Governments of Switzerland and The Netherlands and the ICCA for their direct financial contributions, and GTZ, Health Canada, IFCS, the SCHC and the Finnish Ministry of Social Affairs and Health for their in-kind financial contributions to Partnership activities in 2003.
12. Current funding will allow the continuation of project activities until early 2004. Additional activities will be subject to availability of financial resources for specific projects. The First Meeting of the Partners for the WSSD Global GHS Partnership highlighted the importance of ensuring sustainable core funding both to support Partnership activities and to provide the functions of the Partnership Secretariat. UNITAR/ILO welcome suggestions and proposals from the SCEGHS regarding how to realize this objective.
13. A UNITAR/ILO framework proposal is available upon request for interested countries and organizations that may be in a position to support project activities at the regional or country level for 2004-2006.
14. UNITAR will continue to update the SCEGHS on these activities over the course of the next year.