

**FOURTH UNECE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING ON
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT
GENEVA, 1-2 December 2009**

Agenda item 6. Chemicals

Keynote address by the International Council of Chemical Associations¹

Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) I would like to thank you for the opportunity to join the panel discussion. The global chemical industry has been an active participant in international sustainable development processes dating back to the 1992 Rio Earth Summit. ICCA – the worldwide voice of the chemical industry – has held Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC since 1998, coordinating the industry's participation in major summit meetings, such as the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), and at regular sessions of the Commission on Sustainable Development.

ICCA fully supports the WSSD 2020 goal that by the year 2020, chemicals will be used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment. As part of efforts to reach this goal, ICCA participated in the formulation and adoption of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) at the International Conference on Chemicals Management in 2006 (ICCM-1).

In addition, ICCA similarly joined with governments and other stakeholders in negotiating the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) as well as the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Procedure and the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and is an active partner in transforming from concept to reality.

The SAICM process has made important progress towards achieving the 2020 goal. ICCA views SAICM as the most effective mechanism for meeting the WSSD goal and believes it should be further strengthened. Its core policy objectives (risk reduction, knowledge and information, governance, capacity building, and illegal traffic) have directly shaped the chemical industry's sustainability efforts.

At ICCM-1 ICCA introduced two voluntary initiatives, the **Responsible Care Global Charter (RCGC)** and the **Global Product Strategy (GPS)** as primary contributions to SAICM and to improving the sound management of chemicals globally.

The Responsible Care Global Charter reflects a commitment by 53 national industry associations. About 80% of the world's 110 top chemical producers and a total of 155 companies have subscribed to the Charter. We extended the Responsible Care network to include Russia, and other countries in Eastern Europe, established a pilot project with Chinese national companies and we are actively exploring an initiative within the gulf region.

¹ The text is presented as received from the author.

The Global Product Strategy works within the context of Responsible Care to focus on enhanced product stewardship throughout the value chain. GPS highlights the chemical industry's commitment to defining safe use conditions, applying safe and environmentally sound management practices, and making relevant information publicly available.

Over the past years, ICCA has made significant progress toward developing guidance to implement GPS. By 2020 we will have:

- Established a base-set of hazard and exposure information adequate to conduct safety assessments for all chemicals in commerce;
- Provided global capacity to implement best assessment practices and management procedures, especially in developing countries;
- Shared relevant product information with co-producers, governments and the public and worked across the value chain so suppliers and customers can effectively evaluate the risks and enhance their performance;
- Made information on chemicals publicly available through the ICCA GPS IT-portal.

Nonetheless, ICCA has also identified several obstacles and constraints to achieving those objectives. Perhaps the biggest constraint is the lack of capacity in certain parts of the developing world to effectively manage chemicals. This lack of capacity can take several forms, for example: lack of appropriate expertise, lack of data and scientific information, lack of resources, and lack of infrastructure. ICCA is working with other SAICM stakeholders to address these gaps through capacity building and other relevant initiatives.

A further challenge is to ensure effective chemicals management across the supply chain and throughout the product lifecycle. ICCA has made important progress in strengthening product stewardship and developing sustainable business practices through Responsible Care, but more remains to be done both within the industry and through additional cooperation with other industry sectors, governments, and other stakeholders, in order to reach the 2020 goal. In this respect, we are looking for to discuss with you possible opportunities for cooperation in certain countries on the Responsible Care program.

As already mentioned, capacity building efforts are crucial. In that sense we are engaging in longer-term capacity building activities to improve the competency of SMEs and developing countries – activities such as GPS Awareness Building workshops, Basic Product Stewardship workshops and Value Chain outreach (Examples for GPS workshops conducted and planned in 2009 / 2010 include: Thailand, China, Russia, Argentina, Japan and Bulgaria, Croatia). Product safety specialists from leading chemical companies are available during the workshops for training and knowledge transfer.

One important lesson learned is that the capability gaps in chemicals management regimes in certain countries have highlighted the need to promote transparent, science-based and cost-effective regulatory regimes around the world, leading ICCA to develop a set of principles for chemicals management systems based on a combination of regulation and industry-led initiatives.

Moreover, ICCA advocates the development of national chemicals management capacities that adhere to common principles and elements in order to foster greater consistency and transparency in regulatory systems. Regulatory convergence (where appropriate) provides greater certainty, and creates an environment in which industry initiatives like the Responsible Care Global Charter and GPS can thrive. GPS was designed to support national, regional, and international chemicals management policy expectations. ICCA views GPS as a best practice example which could serve as a basis for the revision of existing regulations in developed countries (e.g., US TSCA) and for the creation on new policies in developing countries. The ultimate objectives of such policies and GPS are the same, protection of human health and the environment.

We believe the chemical industry has a unique role to play in promoting sustainable development. It is committed to preserving our resources for future generations by reducing emissions, conserving energy, and developing sustainable materials, technologies and business practices. In addition to being committed to achieving sustainable outcomes, the industry helps to provide sustainable development solutions for other industry sectors, including energy, information technology, construction, and the waste sector. Chemistry and the chemical industry is also instrumental in meeting human needs, including food and clothing, housing, transport, and communications. All those above mentioned elements would also help to meet the Millennium Development Goals.

Thank you to listen to the chemical industry.

Hubert Mandery
ICCA Council Secretary