

**FOURTH UNECE REGIONAL IMPLEMENTATION MEETING ON  
SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT**

*GENEVA, 1-2 December 2009*

**Agenda item 6. Chemicals**

Intervention by Switzerland<sup>1</sup>

- For Switzerland, the sustainable management of chemicals is an important priority, not only at the national level, but also internationally. Chemicals offer tremendous opportunities and benefits and today's well-being would not be possible without chemicals. At the same time, they can also pose a challenge and risk to the environment and the human health.
- As host of many important international institutions in the area of chemicals and wastes and also as host to an important industrial sector in this area, Switzerland considers to have a specific responsibility in this area.

*A. What is the most appropriate way to build capacity in chemicals management, including infrastructure and regulatory frameworks, in the region?*

- In the light of the global interdependencies, the opportunities and benefits of chemicals do not remain limited to one place, nor can the challenges be addressed locally in an effective manner. Therefore, international cooperation to promote sustainable development is especially necessary in the field of chemicals.
- In order to build capacity in chemicals and waste management, we should first and foremost make good use of the possibilities, mechanisms and programmes provided by the relevant international conventions and organizations in the area of chemicals and waste management.
- Chemicals and waste have been one of the success stories since the Rio conference. Important international legal instruments and frameworks have been adopted with regard to the sound management of hazardous chemicals and wastes, namely the Basel Convention, the Rotterdam Convention (PIC), the Stockholm Convention (POPs), the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). We should make use of the capacity building opportunities these instruments provide and we should also make use of the specific know how and assistance that can be provided by organizations such as UNEP through its Chemicals Branch, UNITAR, the WHO and the ILO.
- Rules and regulations are only as effective as their implementation. This is the reason why Switzerland is committed to support the implementation of chemicals and wastes policies in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, where according to the background paper demand for chemicals continues to increase. Cleaner Production Centers are important tool that can play a very important role in this regard, as pointed out by the representative of CPCs in this statement.
- Switzerland has been actively working with and providing support to all the institutions mentioned before. We have for example been strongly involved in developing proposals to ensure enhanced

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<sup>1</sup> The text is presented as received from the author.

support for developing countries and countries with economies in transition in the implementation of SAICM. We are also one of the main donors to the SAICM Quick Start Programme.

*D. How can emerging problems associated with hazardous chemicals be identified?*

- Little is known about the environmental effects and fate of many chemicals still being manufactured today. For this reason, the testing and assessment of chemicals needs to be stepped up, and the scientific basis for their evaluation needs to be improved.
- One example where this needs to happen are nanoparticles. Nanotechnology offers a wide range of applications in medicine, energy technology, the storage of data, the manufacture of new materials, etc. However, the potential and also the risks of this new technology still remain difficult to assess.
- At the national level, Switzerland is therefore developing an action plan for the assessment and management of risks associated with nanoparticles.
- Cooperation at the international level is also important for identifying the risks. Switzerland has therefore lead the preparations for including nanotechnology as a new and emerging issue into SAICM's programme of work.

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