

GLOBAL AND REGIONAL INITIATIVES TO PROMOTE THE DEVELOPMENT OF POLLUTANT RELEASE AND TRANSFER REGISTERS

Intervention made by

Lesley Onyon
Senior Programme Officer
SAICM Secretariat
Chemicals Branch
Division of Technology, Industry and Economics
United Nations Environment Programme
11-13 chemin des Anémones
CH-1219 Châtelaine, Geneva
Switzerland
www.chem.unep.ch/saicm

Honorable Chairman, distinguished representatives and delegates, it is my honour on behalf of the secretariat of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) to address this high-level segment of the first Meeting of the Parties to the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers of the Aarhus Convention.

SAICM is a broad global policy framework which aims to focus the efforts towards the achievement of the Johannesburg Plan of implementation goal that “by 2020 chemicals will be produced and used in ways that minimize significant adverse impacts on human health and the environment”.

SAICM has a broad and diverse constituency and a growing network which includes focal points, nominated by over 170 governments and over 70 non-governmental organizations, including civil society groups, industry and regional integration organizations as well as from many areas of the UN family. We welcome the Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention, UNITAR, OECD and others actively addressing PRTR as an integral part of this broad SAICM constituency.

There is already strong policy coherence between the Aarhus Convention and the Strategic Approach. Such policy coherence is fundamental to achieving synergies in our work.

Without effective governance structures in place, reaching the 2020 goal for sound chemicals management will be difficult. The Overarching SAICM Policy Strategy highlights the need for transparent and open implementation processes, and public participation in decision-making involving in particular the equal participation of women.

The limited information on many chemicals currently in use and the lack of access to existing information remains one of SAICM's driving forces. Without adequate knowledge and information available sound decision-making is hindered and obscured.

Effective governance and knowledge and information are therefore at the centre of both SAICM and the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on Pollution Release and Transfer Registers.

While SAICM is voluntary in nature its Global Plan of Action provides guidance on what can be undertaken to achieve the overarching policy objectives, The suggested activities are accompanied by indicators of progress, targets and timeframes giving us a sense of the urgency needed and adding further impetus for work. PRTR are one of the 37 work areas exemplified in the SAICM Global Plan of Action. Indicators of progress for these activities include:

That by 2010:

- ***Public access to national environmental information is improved;***
- ***Mechanisms for the dissemination of timely and accurate information from PRTR are developed; and***
- ***Harmonized environmental performance requirements are developed.***

And that by 2015:

- ***All stakeholders have access to PRTR information;***
- ***Manuals and implementation guides are developed; and***
- ***A framework for creating national PRTR is established and PRTR are implemented in all countries.***

Capacity Building support

SAICM has been making a real difference on the ground through enabling developing countries, least developed countries, small island developing States and countries with economies in transition to make a start in addressing their priority capacity-building needs.

SAICM's Quick Start Programme Trust Fund provides a new source of funding for this purpose and over the past 4 years over \$20 million dollars has been awarded to 90 government-led projects and 10 projects led by civil society.

A number of Quick Start Programme projects have embraced PRTR. Notably two, in Panama and in Georgia, are giving PRTR implementation design an over-riding focus. Several others are considering and addressing PRTR in the context of broader SAICM implementation plans.

Details of the projects being undertaken and those countries remaining eligible for funding until the can be found on the SAICM website.

SAICM Implementation

In response to growing demands, guidance for developing SAICM Implementation Plans was launched at the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management. This guidance is an example of the successful collaboration between the SAICM secretariat and the participating intergovernmental organizations of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC).

The guidance provides practical guidance to assist both countries and regions in further developing their plans and identifying priorities. The numerous case studies and examples which pepper the guidance include reference to PRTR.

Reporting on SAICM Implementation

The work of the IOMC participating organizations has a clear value and relevance for SAICM implementation.

Use of the guidance and tools developed by OECD and UNITAR for developing and implementing PRTR and other aspects of sound chemicals management will be monitored by the Conference as part of the agreed arrangements for reporting on progress in SAICM implementation.

These reporting modalities will also include collecting data on the status of implementation of relevant international and regional conventions and agreements, including the Aarhus Convention, the availability of environmental and biomonitoring data, and the strategies used by countries for providing and communicating information to stakeholders including vulnerable groups.

Formal reports of progress, including major trends will be considered in details by the conference starting at its next session in 2012.

Emerging Policy Issues

Emerging policy issues are an important function of SAICM and the efforts of IOMC together with other major stakeholders including the secretariats of the Basel and Stockholm Conventions have been vital in pushing forward work this work.

Emerging policy issues are broadly those issues which are recognized as insufficiently addressed or which arise from current level of scientific knowledge and information and which may have significant adverse effects on human health and/or the environment.

The second session of the Conference, held in May 2009, considered four such issues: lead in paint, chemicals in products, hazardous substances within the life cycle of electrical and electronic products, and nanotechnologies and manufactured nanomaterials. As a result a series of concerted actions has been initiated raising awareness and focusing attention and action. Several issues these first emerging policy issues may be of interest to the future development of PRTR such as pollution from non-point sources.

A transparent and open process of nomination of future emerging policy issues has been put in place and the Parties to the PRTR protocol as well as other stakeholders may wish to consider whether there are elements of the work on PRTR that might warrant such a level of focus in the future. If so, the deadline for nomination of issues ahead of the third session of the Conference is November 2010.

Clearly one of the main advantage of SAICM is in its ability to foster the implementation of established international priorities drawing on policy coherence and leveraging synergies. Its broad constituency, multistakeholder and multisector character are unique and provide a effective forum for progressing the international chemicals agenda. We recognize PRTR as a firm part of this agenda and stand ready to work with you in building upon the successes so far achieved and marked by this first meeting of the Parties to the Protocol.

Thank you for your attention
