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INTER-ORGANIZATION PROGRAMME FOR THE

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SOUND MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS (IOMC)

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Global Harmonization of Chemical Classification and Labelling Systems

18th Consultation of the IOMC Coordinating Group for
the Harmonization of Chemical Classification Systems
ILO H.Q., Geneva, 24-25 May 2001

Provisional Record

Opening, Record of the last meeting and Agenda

The meeting was opened by Ms. Silk, Chairperson of the IOMC Coordinating Group. The provisional agenda was adopted without modification. The record of the 17th Consultation (IOMC/CG17/00.3; Rome, 2-3 November 2000) was adopted as amended to take into account remarks by Dr. Koeter on the status of the work of OECD and of Ms. Lowe (USA) on factual and typographic errors. A list of participants is provided in Annex.

Status of the technical work

Classification criteria

Dr. Koeter described the status of OECD work on classification criteria for substances and mixtures. A guidance document on environmental hazards was agreed by an expert group in January 2001. Items for which some additional work was still included aquatic toxicity (guidance on transformation/dissolution protocol re metals and substances aquatic toxicity testing). An agreement on skin and eye irritation was reached in February 2001. It was hoped that all outstanding issues would be resolved in time for the June 2001 OECD Joint Meeting of the Chemicals Group.

Physical hazards

Dr. Oberreuter reported on the SCETDG working group on harmonization of physical hazards. Limited progress had been made on aerosols but it was hoped that the work could be completed in July or at the latest in December 2001. A decision on the number of categories and criteria was still needed. On the other hand the work on the definition of compressed gases had been completed.

Hazard Communication

Dr Pratt reported on the outcome of the last meeting of the ILO Working Group on Hazard Communication. A Step 3 Document for a harmonized system including labelling elements and chemical safety data sheets was finalized but a number of points still needed additional work. A list of precautionary statements was provided only as guidance and it was expected that the SCGHS would have to look at this aspect in the future. Concerning the issue of a symbol for acute vs chronic health hazards, it was agreed that the skull and cross bones would be reserved for acute hazards and that a new symbol, based on a proposal by ILO would be developed before the end of 2001. In relation to the concern raised by the US air transport industry on the use of the diamond shape for GHS hazard symbols, the Working Group agreed to request the UN SCETDG to discuss the issue at their July and December 2001 meetings. Hazard communication elements would have to be assigned to the flammable aerosol class as soon as the SCETDG reaches agreement on classification, hopefully before

the end of 2001. The record of the 7th meeting of the Working Group (ILO/HC7/01.7) should be available very soon and would provide additional details on the other points and additional tasks to be completed before the end of 2001.

Implementation of the GHS work

Ms. Bernardini (UN ECE) informed the Coordinating Group (CG) that a new Web Site had been set-up for the SC/GHS at

<http://www.unece.org/trans/main/dgdb/dgsubc4/c4age.html>

Capacity building

Mr. Boljkovacs (UNITAR) provided an update on ILO/UNITAR capacity building efforts for the GHS. A project document and policy guidance were being developed for the June 2001 meeting of the IOMC in Geneva and a version of the document would be made available for the July meeting of the SC/GHS. Consultations were under way to extend the inter-organisation cooperation on capacity building by including the OECD. Action steps considered would include the development of a guidance document for a pilot phase to help countries implement the GHS, awareness raising activities, analysis of national infrastructures, the preparation of an action plan for the development phase and the identification/development of training modules and materials. It was hoped that work in at least two pilot countries could start in September 2001. A suggestion by Ms Silk to have the Title of the policy document changed to "Strategy for Implementing the GHS" was accepted.

Guidance Document on the GHS

Ms. Silk introduced this Agenda item and stated a number of facts related to the development of the GHS Guidance document:

- The CG is mandated by the IFCS and the IOMC to produce the GHS and the Guidance document is the tool to provide the technical implementation framework for the outputs produced by the three focal points.
- Ms. Headrick (Canada) has provided the lead for a Drafting Group to develop the document as a transparent decision logic system for classifying chemicals and selecting related labelling components.
- More people were needed to strengthen the Drafting Group so that the document can be completed for its transmission to the SC/GHS before July 2002 as agreed
- Since this was the last meeting of the CG, an extended Drafting Group consultation could be envisaged in July 2001 just after the SC/GHS meeting.
- The first version of the Document should be ready by September 2001, in time for presentation at the December 2001 Session of the SC/GHS

In considering the paper presented to the CG, Ms. Headrick added that there was still no consensus within the DG on the structure of the document or issues such as the GHS updating process and therefore a significant amount of work had to be done. Further input was needed from the DG on the direction the work should take. Ms. Silk proposed that Mr. Obadia (ILO), Ms Bernardini and Dr. Koeter could join forces and merge the three proposals on classification criteria, physical hazards and hazard communication and use the resulting document as a basis for continuing the work. Dr Koeter agreed it could be done without touching the contents of the three documents and the results would be a good basis for adding any guidance and examples that would be necessary. Mr. Fasey (UK) pointed out that some examples were already tabled as room documents and could already be discussed.

Mr. Benassai (Chair UN CDETDG) agreed that a consolidated text including classification criteria and related labelling elements for each hazard class and category (substances and mixtures) before the guidance part could be drafted. However he doubted that the DG could complete this work before 2002 and it would be more appropriate to focus on finalizing consolidation of the three proposals. He pointed out to the imbalance of technical explanations between the OECD classification criteria paper and the Physical Hazards paper.

Mr. Oberreuter (Germany) stated that the CETDG Working party was expected to develop only criteria and not guidance. Too much work still needed and he proposed that the task of finalizing the GHS document be moved to the SC/GHS. Ms. Lowe (USA) felt that the SC/GHS would not be in a position to formulate the necessary guidance and decision logic at this time. Dr. Koeter stated that a consolidation of the technical parts of the GHS would make it easier to evaluate the amount of guidance that would be needed to complete the GHS document. This would take only a few days to do. He agreed that it would be more efficient to have the document completed by the CG.

After a lengthy discussion on the terms of reference for the CG and the SC/GHS and the pros and cons of moving the GHS Guidance document development to the SC/GHS, the following consensus position was finally agreed:

- The development of the GHS Guidance Document will continue to be carried out by the CG and completed before the July 2002 deadline;
- At its July 2001 Session, the SC/GHS will be requested to recognize the work of the ILO, OECD and CETDG and ask the CG to continue the elaboration of the Document and to report to the SC/GHS on progress. If it decides, the SC/GHS could provide expert assistance to dispatch the work faster;
- There will be no more meetings of the Coordinating Group and all the work will be done through e.mail
- Completion of the GHS Document will be the main task of the CG until it is completed.

After the issue was settled, a significant number of participants volunteered to draft specific parts or chapters of the of the document. It was agreed that Dr. Koeter, Ms. Bernardini and Mr. Obadia would take on as soon as possible the work of consolidating the Classification and hazard communication parts. A deadline for 1 December 2001 for a first complete draft in time for the second session of the SC/GHS was agreed.

In relation to the concern expressed by the air transport sector, a majority of the CG supported the conclusions of the ILO Working Group and agreed that an Information paper asking the SC/TDG to consider the problem and provide an expert opinion on the problem by the end of its December 2001 session. On a question related to terminology, the CG decided that the terms “hazard class” and “hazard category” would be used to respectively define hazard and level of severity.

International Cooperation

Ms Silk read to the CG a letter from President of the IFCS. He wished to encourage participants reach a conclusion that would enhance the safe use of chemicals on a global scale, and was honoured that Brazil was represented at the meeting and would play a part in that process. Mr. Obadia pointed out to the participants that the final report of the UN Secretary General to the Rio +10 Summit (Johannesburgh, September 2001) on the progress made in the implementation of Agenda 21 Chapters 19, 20 and 21 on chemicals was available as a room document. The progress made on the GHS work was reflected adequately.

Closure

In closing the last consultation of the Coordinating Group, the participants paid tribute to the various contributions made by all during the last 10 years, and particularly to Mr Jim McLellan (Canada) and Dr. Michel Gilbert who died during that period.

ANNEX

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS
<p>Mr. Benassai Sergio, Chairman UN CETDG, Agenzia Nazionale per la Protezione dell' Ambiente, Via V. Brancati 48, Roma 00144, Italy. Tel: 39 06 5007 2573. Fax: 39 06 5007 2584. E-Mail: benassai@anpa.it</p>
<p>Ms. Bernardini Francesca, Secretariat, UN/ECOSOC Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods, UN/ECE, Transport Division, Room 414, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. Tel: 41 22 917 2463. Fax: 41 22 917 0039. E.mail: francesca.bernardini@unece.org</p>
<p>Dr. Blaude Marie-Noëlle, Institute for Public Health - Louis Pasteur (IPH), Juliette Wytsmanstraat 16, 1050 Bruxelles, Belgium. Tel: 00 32 2 642 5587. Fax: 00 32 2 642 5254. E-Mail: mn.blaude@iph.fgov.be</p>
<p>Mr. Boljkovac Craig, Deputy-Programme Coordinator, UNITAR, Palais des Nations, 1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland. Tel: 41 22 917 8471. Fax: 41 22 917 8047. E.mail: craig.boljkovac@unitar.org</p>
<p>Mr. Cheolhong Lim, Senior Researcher, Occupational Safety and Health Research Institute, 104-8 Moonji-Dong Yusong-Ku, Taejon 305-380, Korea. Tel: 82-42-863-8363. Fax: 82-42-863-8361. E-mail: limch@kosha.net</p>
<p>Mr. Cotterill Alan, Manager, Policy and Program Services Office, Product Safety Programs, Health Canada, 123 Slater St., 5th Floor, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada K1A 0L2. Tel.: 1 613 954 0170. Fax: 1 613 946 1100. E-Mail: alan_cotterill@hc-sc.gc.ca</p>
<p>Ms. Di Discordia Paola, EIMAC, c/o Eurométaux, 12 Av. De Broqueville, B-1150 Bruxelles. Tel: 32 2 775 6313. Fax: 32 2 779 0523. E.mail: didiscordia@eurometaux.be</p>
<p>Mr. Fasey Andrew, Chemicals Policy Division, Health Directorate, Health and Safety Executive, Rose Court, 2 Southwark Bridge, London, SE1 9HS, United Kingdom. Tel: 44 207 717 6391. Fax: 44 297 717 6221. E.mail: andrew.fasey@hse.gsi.gov.uk</p>
<p>Mr. Galves Jose Antonio, Advogados Associados (representing Brazilian Chemical Industries), Rua Francisco Arvani, 181, Santo Amaro, S.P. Capital, Brazil. Tel: 11 246 8945 / 521 3831. E.mail: jagalves@stivip.com.br</p>
<p>Mr. Götsch Hermann, Federal Ministry of Environment, Youth and Family Affairs, Chemicals (Dept I/2), Stubenbastei 5, A-1010 Vienna, Austria. Tel: 43 1 515 22 2338. Fax: 43 1 515 22 7334. E.mail: hermann.goetsch@bmu.gv.at</p>
<p>Mr. Green Reg, Health, Safety and Environment Officer, International Federation of Chemical, Energy Mine and General Worker' Unions (ICEM), Avenue Emile de Beco 109, B-1050, Bruxelles, Belgium. Tel: 32 2 626 2020. Fax: 32 2 648 4316. E.mail: reg.green@icem.org</p>
<p>Mr. Haas Ulrich, (representing IOE), Manager Product Safety, Henkel, Henkelstrasse 67, D-401091 Düsseldorf, Germany. Tel: 49 211 797 9129. Fax: 49 211 798 1194. E-Mail: ulrich.haas@henkel.de</p>
<p>Ms. Hardeng Solvår, Senior Advisor, Ministry of Environment, P.O. Box 8013 Dep., Oslo N-0030, Norway. Tel: 47 2224 5926. Fax: 47 2224 9563. E-Mail: soh@md.dep.no</p>
<p>Ms. Headrick Kim, International Harmonization, Product Safety Bureau, Health Canada, Room 564, 123 Slater St., A.L: 350501, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0L2, Canada. Tel: 1 613 952 9597. Fax: 1 613 946 1100. E-Mail: kim_headrick@hc-sc.gc.ca</p>

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Mr. **Hirsh Paul**, International Affairs, American Chemistry Council, 1300 Wilson Blvd., Arlington, VA 22209, USA. Tel: 1 703 741 5237. Fax: 1 703 741 6237.
E-Mail: phirsh@americanchemistry.com

Dr. **How Mervyn**, Chairman AISE, 31 Nursery Gardens, Bedford MK 18DU, UK. Tel: 44 12 34 21 81 19. Fax: 44 12 34 21 81 44. E-mail: mervynhow@kbnnet.co.uk

Ms. **Jensen-Korte Uta**, Head of Product Regulation, Health and Safety, European Chemical Industries Council (CEFIC), Ave. E. Van Niewenhuyse 4, bte 1, B-1160 Bruxelles, Belgium.
Tel: 32 2 676 7213. Fax: 32 2 676 7332. E-Mail: uje@cefic.be

Dr. **Jonai Hiroshi**, Senior Researcher, Division of Research Planning, National Institute of Industrial Health, Ministry of Labour, 6-21-1 Nagao Tama-Ku, Kawasaki 214-8585, Japan.
Tel: 81 44 865 6111. Fax: 81 44 865 6116. E-Mail: jonai@niih.go.jp

Dr. **Kahler-Jenett Elke**, Division of Hazardous Substances, Federal Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Friedrich-Henkel-Weg 1-25, Dortmund, D-44149, Germany.
Tel: 49 231 9071 589. Fax: 49 231 9071 611. E-Mail: kahler-jenett.elke@baua.bund.de

Dr. **Koëter Herman B.W.M**, Principal Administrator, Environmental Health and Safety Division, Environment Directorate, OECD, 2, rue André-Pascal, 75775 Paris Cedex, France.
Tel: 33 1 45 24 9844. Fax: 33 1 45 24 1675. E-Mail: herman.koeter@OECD.org

Dr. **Kohrman Karen**, Human and Environmental Safety Division, General Toxicology Organization, Procter and Gamble Co., Miami Valley Laboratories, P.O. Box 538707, Cincinnati, Ohio 45253-8707, USA. Tel: 1 513 627 2670. Fax: 1 513 627 1167. E-Mail: kohrman.ka@pg.com

Ms. **Lowe Mary Frances**, EPA/Office of Pesticide Programs, Washington D.C., USA. Tel: 1 703 305 5689. Fax: 1 703 308 1850. E-Mail: lowe.maryfrances@epa.gov

Mr. **Lowe William**, Vice-President Operations, Hazardous Materials Information Review Commission, 200 Kent St, Suite 9000, Ottawa Ontario K1A 0M1, Canada. Tel: 1 613 993 5015. Fax: 1 613 993 4686. E-mail: bill_lowe@hc-sc.gc.ca.

Mr. **Lu Haiyan**, Deputy Chief, General Office for Accident Statistics and Control, State Administration of Work Safety Supervision, 21 Helpinglibei jie, Dongcheng District, Beijing 100713, P.R. China. Tel: 86 10 64 21 77 66/22 23 26. Fax: 86 10 64 23 46 62.

Mr. **Machin William**, Councillor, European Chemical Industries Council (CEFIC), Ave. E. Van Niewenhuyse 4, bte 1, B-1160 Bruxelles, Belgium.
Tel: 32 2 676 7277. Fax: 32 2 676 7332. E-mail: wma@cefic.be

Mr. **Nash Stephen M.**, HM/DG Consultant, Corporate Environmental Affairs, Eli Lilly and Company, Lilly Corporate Center, Indianapolis, IN 46285, USA.
Tel: 1 317 276 3537. Fax: 1 317 276 1800. E-Mail: s.nash@Lilly.com

Mr. **Oberreuter Gregor**, Dangerous Goods Section, Ministry of Transport, Construction and Housing, Postfach 200 100, D-53170 Bonn, Germany. Tel: 49 228 300 2754. Fax: 49 228 300 3428.
E-Mail: gregor.oberreuter@bmvbw.bund.de

Dr. **Oyama Kiyotaka**, General Manager, International Affairs Office, Japan Chemical Industries Association (JCIA), Kazan Bldg, 2-4 Kasumigaseki 3-chome, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 100-0013, Japan.
Tel: 81 3 3519 21 66. Fax: 81 3 3580 0764.
E-mail: koyama@jcia.net.or.jp

Ms. **Pettersson Ingrid**, National Chemicals Inspectorate, P.O. Box 1384, S-171 27 Solna, Sweden. Tel: 46 8 783 1246. Fax: 46 8 735 76 98. E-Mail: ingrid.pettersson@kemi.se

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Dr. **Plattner Edmund**, Director, Department I/3, Federal Ministry of Environment, Stubenbastei 5, A-1010 Vienna, Austria. Tel: 43 1 515 222 346. Fax: 43 1 513 1679 1480.
E-Mail: edmund.plattner@bmu.gv.at

Dr. **Pratt Iona**, Director of Specialists Unit, National Authority for Occupational Safety and Health, 10 Hogan Place, Dublin 2, Ireland. Tel: 353 1 614 7109. Fax: 353 1 614 7021. E-Mail: iona@hsa.ie

Mr. **Puiatti Roque**, Health and Safety Inspector, Regional Office/RS, Ministry of Labour, Av. Mauà, 1013 - 3º andar, Porto Alegre, RS, Brazil. Tel: 55 51 228 6544. Fax: 55 51 226 8730/388 1036.
E-Mail: rpuiatti@via-rs.net

Mr. **Robson Peter G.**, Consultant to CCPA, Kingston, Ontario, Canada
Tel: 1 613 549 1284. Fax: 1 613 549 6249 E-Mail: probson@limestone.kosone.com

Dr. **Roelfzema Henk**, Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sport, Parnassusplein 5, 2511 VX Den Haag, [Postbus 20350, 2500 EJ Den Haag], The Netherlands.
Tel: 31 70 340 6965. Fax: 31 70 340 5554. E-Mail: h.roelfzema@minvws.nl

Dr. **Sargent Edward**, Senior Director of Toxicology, Merck & Co. Inc., P.O. Box 200, WSW2-13, Whitehouse Station, New-Jersey, 08889-0200. Tel: 1 908 423 7906. Fax: 1 908 735 1496. E.mail: edward_sergeant@merck.com

Dr. **Savard Jacques**, Director Regulatory Affairs, Transport Dangerous Goods, Transport Canada, Place de Ville, Tower C, 330 Sparks St., 9th floor, Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0N5, Canada.
Tel: 1 613 990 1154. Fax: 1 613 993 5925. E-Mail: savarjj@tc.gc.ca

Dr. **Schwartz Charles S.**, Director Occupational Toxicology and Hazard Assessment, Pfizer Inc., 235 E 42nd Street, New York, N.Y. 10017, USA.
Tel: 1 212 573 7317. Fax: 1 212 573 7004. E-Mail: chuck.schwartz@pfizer.com

Ms. **Silk Jennifer**, Director, Office of Technical Programs and Coordination Activities, US OSHA, 200 Constitution Ave. NW, Room N3653, Washington DC 20210, USA.
Tel: 1 202 693 2110. Fax: 1 202 693 1644. E-Mail: jennifer.silk@osha.gov

Mr. **Stoffman Larry**, Canadian Labour Congress, Director Occupational Health/Safety, United Food & Commercial Workers, 3561 W. 35th Ave., Vancouver, BC, Canada V6N 2N4.
Tel: 604 528 0863. E.mail: larryst@attcanada.net

Ms. **Sundquist Anna-Liisa**, Ministry of Social Affairs and Health, P.O. Box 536, SF-33101 Tampere, Finland. Tel: 358 3 2608 443. Fax: 358 3 2608 425. E-Mail: anna-liisa.sundquist@stm.vn.fi

Prof. Dr. **Wettig Klaus**, Federal Institute for Health Protection of the Consumers, D-14191 Berlin, Thielallee 88, Germany. Tel: 0188-84125866. Fax: 0188-84123264. E-Mail: lk.wettig@bgvv.de

Mr. **Wright Michael J.**, Director of Health, Safety and Environment, United Steelworkers of America (USWA), 5 Gateway Center, Pittsburgh, PA 15222, USA.
Tel: 1 412 562 2581. Fax: 1 412 562 2584. E-Mail: mwright@uswa.org

SECRETARIAT

Mr. **Obadia Isaac**, SafeWork Branch, International Labour Office, 1211 Geneva 22, Switzerland.
Tel: 41 22 799 6746. Fax: 41 22 799 6878. E.mail: obadia@ilo.org.

Ms. **Wyeth Julie**, Chemicals Policy Division, Health Directorate, Health and Safety Executive, Rosecourt, 2 Southwark Bridge, London, SE1 9HS, United Kingdom.
Tel: 44 1 207 717 6350. Fax: 44 207 717 6221.
E-Mail: julie.wyeth@hse.gsi.gov.uk