



**Secretariat**

Distr.  
GENERAL

ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2002/13  
31 May 2002

ENGLISH  
Original: ENGLISH AND FRENCH

**COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE TRANSPORT OF  
DANGEROUS GOODS AND ON THE GLOBALLY  
HARMONIZED SYSTEM OF CLASSIFICATION  
AND LABELLING OF CHEMICALS**

**Sub-Committee of Experts on the Globally  
Harmonized System of Classification  
and Labelling of Chemicals  
(Third session, 10-12 July 2002,  
agenda item 2)**

**GLOBALY HARMONIZED SYSTEM OF CLASSIFICATION  
AND LABELLING OF CHEMICALS**

**New GHS symbol for serious health effects**

**Transmitted by the expert from Sweden**

At the UN Sub-Committee meeting on Global Harmonisation System of Classification and Labelling (UN SC GHS) in December 2001 Sweden presented a proposal on modified health hazard symbols UN/SCEGHS/2/INF.5 (UN/SCETDG/20/INF. 40). These symbols were proposed as candidate symbols for the following severe health effects: cancer/mutagenicity/ reproduction toxicity (Categories 1- 2), target organ systemic toxicity (single and repeated exposure, Cat 1-2) and respiratory sensitisation (Cat 1), and were presented as possible alternatives to the “double exclamation mark” symbol. A majority of the participating countries that expressed their opinion at the meeting supported an alternative symbol. On request Sweden was asked to examine, with transparency, the extent of support from the participating countries for the alternative symbols.

After consultation with meeting participants some further modifications of the symbols were made by the advertising company, which had developed the proposed symbols. In February a set of four symbols (see Annex 1) was sent to the participating countries of the UN SC GHS meeting with a request if they preferred the proposed symbols to the double exclamation mark. If the countries did prefer the proposed symbols, they were asked to point out their favourite. The result from our inquiry is presented in the attached table. The preferred symbols and the comments given by respective country are presented. The summary shows that the majority of the responding countries preferred an alternative symbol and there seems to be a preference for symbol No. 4, i.e. half-size person damaged from the inside of the body. Of those countries that did not chose No. 4 in the first place many countries expressed that they accepted *any* of the other proposed symbols.

As an outcome of the presented results Sweden would like to propose symbol No.4 as being the strongest alternative candidate to the double exclamation mark. This is a symbol that next to the symbol “skull and crossbones” mediates a strong signal of warning for danger to human health. The symbol also gives a sharp picture in a small size and functions in black and white.

**Annex 1**  
(NOTE: the border is red)

Fig 1



Fig 2



Fig 3



Fig 4



## Annex 2

## Summary of opinions on preferred symbols

Country/name	Preferred symbols				Comments
	1	2	3	4	
<b>Denmark</b> A Schytz				X	Denmark prefers symbol No. 4, but in principle we can accept them all.
<b>Italy</b> R Binetti				X	Half size body is much more visible than the full body. Italy prefers No. 4.
<b>South Africa</b> D Fourie		X			It conveys the idea of something slowly attacking the body. A number of people, including graphic designers, have made this choice.
<b>Greece</b> A Tsatsou-Dritsa			X		We do not have any strong preference among the proposed symbols but prefer No. 3.
<b>The Netherlands</b> H Roelfzema			X	X	The symbols seem better than the double exclamation mark (opinion of a few people). If No. 4 is made less friendly and modified with nasty white holes at different parts it is probably the best one.
H de Wijs			(X)	(X)	Out of 300 persons asked from the transport and chemical sector 206 responded. 74/206 preferred No. 3 or 4, and 115/206 the double exclamation mark
<b>Germany</b> E Kahler-Jenett			X		Germany has a preference for No. 3, but can also accept one of the other Swedish proposals
<b>Canada</b> K Headrick					My preference is the double exclamation mark. Could the "hourglass" symbol be reconsidered as an alternative to the double exclamation mark?
<b>Japan</b> Akemi Nishio	X				After consultation of some colleagues we prefer No. 1. Industry people may have another opinion. Their opinion is asked for.
I Pratt				X	Individual response. Could be made more "gender- neutral". A round-headed alternative might be better
<b>Portugal</b> R Simoes			X		We are in favour of No 3 but can accept the others. Could No.3 be modified to visualise "dissolution " from the inside of the body?
<b>Finland</b> A-L Sundquist	X	X			We are ready to be quite flexible and could accept any of the proposed pictograms. People asked seem to prefer "powder man". It perhaps may be necessary to make No. 2 less masculine.
<b>Belgium</b> T Lakhanisky				X	Majority preference for No.4.
<b>Norway</b> S Hardeng				X	My colleagues agreed that the symbols were good candidates for replacement of the double exclamation mark. A modification of the head ("softening) is suggested. Second choice, No.2.
<b>USA</b> J. Silk					The exclamation point is an excellent symbol from a design perspective, it is clear even in small size. The proposed symbols could be misleading with regard to the hazard they are attempting to convey.

Country/name	Preferred symbols				Comments
	1	2	3	4	
<b>China</b> Wang Yihui	X				No strong preference. We prefer figure No. 1.
<b>United Kingdom</b> B. Warner J. Hart					UK preference for double exclamation mark UK, transport, supports double exclamation mark
<b>Australia</b> D. Wagner					No agreement reached of a formal position. I believe that Australia would support double exclamation mark if no consensus is reached on an alternative symbol.
<b>Islamic Republic of Iran</b> H. Ghadiri / B. Abolmalli	X				We prefer No. 1 but can accept any of the proposed pictograms
<b>Poland</b> B. Hancyk			X	X	We prefer symbols No. 3 or 4.
<b>Bulgaria</b> N. Kirkov	X			X	We prefer No 4, and also No 1
<b>Brazil</b> R. Puiatti					Have not yet been able to formally discuss this matter
<b>Switzerland</b> E. Sigrist	X				We prefer No 1 but can accept all other proposed symbols
<b>France</b> C. Paul				X	We still prefer the skull and crossbones but can accept a compromise. We prefer symbol No. 4 (second choice No. 3) to the double exclamation mark (advise of all ministry, labour, health, transport, environment).
<b>Sweden</b> S. Ljungquist				X	We prefer No. 4, second choice No. 2. All proposed symbols are better than the double exclamation mark.
A. Facey					I prefer the double exclamation mark (personal opinion)
<b>Zambia</b> N. Manda			X	X	Zambia prefers symbols No. 3 or 4 and finds all proposed symbols better than the double exclamation mark. For a broader representation of views on the proposed symbols the people targeted were from educated to illiterate, farm workers to office workers. The workers rely on what they see. The double exclamation mark has no impact on uneducated.
<b>Czech Republic</b> L. Fica				X	We prefer symbol No. 4 and prefer any of these symbols to the double exclamation mark.
<b>Austria</b> H. Götsch				X	Best proposal is No. 4. We prefer any one of your proposed symbols to the double exclamation mark.