

# UN/SCEGHS/6/INF.5

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**Sub-Committee of Experts  
on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification  
and Labelling of Chemical  
(Sixth session, 10-12 December 2003)  
(agenda item 5(c))**

## **COOPERATION WITH OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS**

### **Note by the secretariat**

The secretariat reproduces hereafter a letter from the IFCS President to the SCE GHS on the results of the Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IPCS Forum IV) regarding the GHS and the GHS workshop which was held as a side-event to the Forum. The document also includes the final report of Forum IV Section on “Capacity Building Assistance” (see C(b) with relation to the GHS), as well as a GHS Action Plan adopted by Forum IV. This GHS Action Plan “focuses on capacity building activities and the need to provide sufficient technical and financial resources to support these efforts”.

The experts of the Sub-Committee may wish to exchange views in particular about the operational paragraphs contained in the GHS Action Plan.



President: Dr Suwit Wibulpolprasert, Thailand  
Executive Secretary: Dr Judy Stober

## Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety

Mrs. Catherine Masson  
UNECE Transport Division  
Palais des Nations  
CH-1211 Geneva 10

4 December 2003

Dear Mrs Masson,

### **Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety Globally Harmonized System (GHS) for Classification and Labelling of Chemicals Action Plan**

The Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (Forum IV), was held in Bangkok, Thailand, from 1-7 November 2003. One hundred and twenty-six governments participated in the meeting, together with representatives from intergovernmental and non governmental organizations representing public interest groups, science, labour and industry. I am writing to bring to the attention of the UN SCEGHS the GHS Action Plan adopted by Forum IV.

At Forum IV the IFCS took stock of the progress achieved on the implementation of IFCS Priorities for Action Beyond 2000 adopted by Forum III in October 2000, including the recommendation that all countries implement the GHS as soon as possible with a view to have the system fully operational by 2008, a goal that was endorsed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development. A Workshop on the GHS was held at Forum IV, sponsored by Canada, UNITAR, GTZ (Germany), the IOMC and the UN ECE. High attendance at the meeting indicated that there is substantial interest and support for the GHS and its implementation. The workshop offered the opportunity for presentations and discussions on the challenges related to the implementation of the GHS at the national level. Resource issues and a lack of awareness within governments and organizations about GHS have been identified as significant barriers to progress implementing GHS. Based on discussions during this workshop, a GHS Action Plan was presented to Forum IV for its consideration. The Forum emphasized the important contribution of the GHS to promote sustainable development and recognized that GHS is one of the top priorities for capacity building for the sound management of chemicals. The GHS Action Plan, adopted by Forum IV, focuses on capacity building activities and the need to provide sufficient technical and financial resources to support these efforts. A copy of the Forum IV GHS Action Plan (Preliminary Version) is enclosed in English, French, Spanish and Russian.

Following a Forum III recommendation, Forum IV discussed a review and examination of past and present capacity building projects for the enhancement of chemical safety ("Assistance for Capacity Building Report for Forum IV" (IFCS/FORUM IV/11w)). The review identified lessons learned and obstacles to successfully launching and carrying out capacity building projects. Forum IV invited countries, non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations, to consider the outcome of the review and the related counsel when undertaking capacity building work. The Forum IV counsel on capacity building assistance is presented in the enclosed paper (*English only*). The UN SCEGHS is invited to take into consideration the counsel in its capacity building efforts on GHS.

I wish the UN SCEGHS continued success in its work and look forward to learning of progress made on this very important IFCS priority.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suwit". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dr.Suwit Wibulpolprasert  
President

Enc: Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety, Final Report, Globally Harmonized System (GHS) for Classification and Labelling of Chemicals, Action Plan (IFCS/FORUM IV/16w) (*English, French, Spanish, Russian*)

Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety, Final Report, Capacity Building Assistance (IFCS/FORUM IV/16w) (*English*)



IFCS/FORUM IV/16w  
Original: English  
7 November 2003

*Chemical Safety in a Vulnerable World*

**FORUM IV**  
**Fourth Session**  
**of the**  
**Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety**

**Bangkok, Thailand**  
**1 – 7 November 2003**

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**Final Report**  
*Preliminary Version*

**Globally Harmonized System (GHS)**  
**for Classification and Labelling of Chemicals**  
**Action Plan**

## **Globally Harmonized System (GHS) for Classification and Labelling of Chemicals Action Plan**

*Emphasizing* the important contribution of the GHS to promote sustainable development, such as reducing barriers to trade, and to protect human health and the environment from dangerous chemicals in all countries;

*Appreciating* the work of the IOMC and the UN Subcommittee of Experts on the GHS (UN SCEGHS) in developing and adopting the GHS as an international instrument;

*Reaffirming* the WSSD recommendation that all countries are encouraged to implement the GHS as soon as possible with a view to have the system fully operational by 2008;

*Noting* the importance of minimizing the transition period to global GHS implementation;

*Emphasizing* the importance of developed countries with existing systems to modify these systems to adopt the GHS;

*Noting* Resolution 2003/64 of July 2003 of the UN Economic and Social Council;

*Appreciating* the activities of the UNITAR/ILO GHS Training and Capacity Building Programme for developing and transition countries, such as implementation of collaborative pilot projects in Zambia, South Africa, Senegal and Sri Lanka;

*Aware of and supporting* the UNITAR/ILO/OECD initiated WSSD Global Partnership for Capacity Building to Implement the GHS launched in 2002;

*Welcoming* the framework workplan of the WSSD GHS Partnership, adopted at the first meeting of Partners on 10 July 2003;

*Emphasizing* that GHS implementation has become one of the top priorities for capacity building for the sound management of chemicals in developing countries and countries with economies in transition;

*Encouraging* developing countries to seek within their national development priorities to integrate chemical management, and in particular the GHS, into national poverty reduction strategies and/or their national sustainable development policies; and

*Noting with concern* that current financial and technical resources to support GHS capacity building are not adequate.

## **Forum IV:**

*Invites* UNITAR/ILO, as the focal point for capacity building in the UN SCEGHS, in collaboration with the Sub-committee to develop a roster of GHS experts who could provide support on training and capacity building activities on the application of GHS classification, labelling, and safety data sheets by the end of 2004.

*Encourages* the WSSD GHS Partnership to aim for the following specific targets for capacity building activities of their framework workplan of the Partnership:

### Development of GHS Awareness Raising, Capacity Building Guidance and Training Materials

- GHS awareness raising, capacity building guidance and training materials (including GHS action plan development guidance, national situation analysis guidance and other training tools) prepared and pilot tested, and these outcomes endorsed by the UN SCEGHS, by the end of 2004.

### GHS Capacity Development at the Regional Level

- At least two regional GHS workshops held and implementation strategies prepared by the end of 2005, taking into consideration regional economic integration arrangements.

### GHS Capacity Development at the National Level

- At least two pilot projects for National GHS Situation Analysis, Action Plan Development and Implementation per IFCS region completed and evaluated by the end of 2006 (with a view to having the GHS operational by 2008).

*Calls upon* countries, regional economic integration organizations, donor organizations, multilateral financial institutions and stakeholder groups, in particular industry, to make available sufficient financial and technical resources to support national and regional GHS capacity building projects in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.<sup>1</sup>

*Invites* the Forum Standing Committee of the IFCS to bring the FORUM IV GHS Action Plan to the attention of the UN SCEGHS, and to submit a progress report to IFCS FORUM V.

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<sup>1</sup> The Governments of Switzerland and Germany have indicated their intention to support various capacity building activities for GHS implementation.



IFCS/FORUM IV/16w  
Original: English  
7 November 2003

*Chemical Safety in a Vulnerable World*

**FORUM IV**  
**Fourth Session**  
**of the**  
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**Bangkok, Thailand**  
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**Final Report**  
*Preliminary Version*

**Selected Section:**  
**Capacity Building Assistance**

## **Capacity Building Assistance**

Recognizing the importance of sound management of chemicals in poverty eradication, Forum IV recommends the promotion of a dialogue with international development assistance institutions (including e.g. UNDP, World Bank) with the goal of integrating chemical safety issues into poverty reduction strategies and national sustainable development strategies, and relevant project activities,

Forum IV invites all governments to integrate chemicals safety policy into development cooperation activities, and promote chemical issues in the relevant governing bodies of international and intergovernmental organizations,

Recognizing the value of the WHO programme on health and sustainable development, Forum IV encourages all international organizations, including UNEP and the other IOMC partner organizations to ensure and/or strengthen the integration of sustainable development and chemicals issues into all relevant activities, e.g. water, waste management, health, agriculture, trade,

Forum IV invites the private sector and civil society to participate actively in the above effort,

Forum IV invites countries, non-governmental organizations and intergovernmental organizations, to consider the related counsel given in the Annex,

And request the FSC to report back on the outcomes of these activities to Forum V.



**ANNEX:**

**Capacity Building Assistance**

Counsel

Forum IV request IFCS participants to take into consideration the following counsel:

A. All IFCS participants:

- a. Should actively seek means to ensure that countries in their economic and social development have core essential capabilities and capacities for the sound management of chemicals covering all stages of the lifecycle and achieve the goals set in the Bahia Declaration
- b. Should promote, establish and maintain a structural dialogue with international development assistance institutions with the goal of integrating chemical safety issues into poverty reduction strategies and national sustainable development strategies, and relevant project activities
- c. Should actively promote integration of sound chemicals management with other environmental management programmes (e.g., water, waste management, health, agriculture, trade) and to the social and economic dimensions of Agenda 21
- d. Should promote chemical safety by identifying, describing and widely disseminating success stories of sound chemicals management programmes
- e. Should explore the development of measurable indicators to assess progress in capacity building for the sound management of chemicals.

B. Countries and stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society, where appropriate:

- a. Should incorporate chemical safety as an integral part of sustainable development policies, poverty eradication strategies, as well as the national development assistance plans and their implementation, including incorporating chemical safety issues into public education, in order to formally confirm that these issues are a country-driven priority
- b. Should integrate chemical safety policy into development cooperation activities and take full advantage of existing opportunities when developing project proposals, including approaching already existing funding mechanisms (such as the GEF)

Acknowledging the outstanding importance of direct development assistance and technology transfer from industrialized countries to developing countries and countries with economies in transition, should strengthen bilateral capacity building efforts,

- c. Should consider defining the financial and methodological mechanisms , including by using existing mechanisms, that can assist them to create and/or strengthen the necessary capacities to ensure chemical safety is achieved
- d. Should apply a multi-stakeholder approach from the outset, including strengthening information flow between stakeholder groups, and the inclusion of organizations that represent local communities
- e. Should incorporate an evaluation framework as part of the project proposal and implement it.

C. IOMC/international organisations:

- a. Should use all possible opportunities for linking the different elements of the chemical safety agenda through enhanced coordination and cooperation
- b. Should use the momentum of a specific entry point, such as an MEA or the GHS, to work with countries on the broader chemicals safety agenda
- c. Should further develop training programmes on e.g. poison control centres, ILO guidelines on compensation in the case of chemical poisoning, emergency preparedness, risk assessment and management, information reporting systems, education and training in precautionary measures, and concentrate efforts on training and long term relationships, avoiding one-time events with no structural context
- d. Including GEF, World Bank, UNEP, WHO, OPCW and other international and intergovernmental organisations, should ensure and/or strengthen the integration of sustainable development and chemicals issues into all relevant activities, e.g. water and waste management, establishment of poison control centres
- e. Including UNDP, World Bank, UNITAR and other IGOs, as appropriate, should facilitate national-level dialogues to assist with integrating chemicals management activities

- f. Particularly UNITAR, should seek additional resources to assist countries with National Profile development and further development of guidelines on awareness-raising<sup>1</sup>

D. OECD-Development Assistance Committee (DAC):

- a. Should promote the integration of sound chemicals management as an important element of human health and environment policy, and give full attention to linking sound chemicals management, in all stages of the life cycle, to other elements of sustainable development.
- b. Should by 2004, further develop the DAC guidelines on the Integration of Rio Conventions into Development Co-operation, issued in 2002, by ensuring the addition of all current and future chemical safety related conventions and agreements.
- c. Should promote an increase of support for developing countries for capacity building for the sound management of chemicals

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<sup>1</sup> It was announced that the European Commission is supporting the UNITAR programme on the development of National Profiles, priority setting and information exchange in an additional 15 countries.