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**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**
(9-11 July 2001)

**REPORT OF THE SUB-COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS
ON ITS FIRST SESSION**

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REPORT

1. The Sub-Committee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals held its first session in Geneva from 9 to 11 July 2001.

OPENING OF THE SESSION

2. The Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), Ms. Danuta Hübner, welcomed participants. She recalled that the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) had been developed to give effect to the recommendations contained in Programme Area B of Chapter 19 of Agenda 21; this work had been carried out since 1992 by the International Labour Office, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the UN Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and coordinated by the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals Coordinating Group for the Harmonization of Chemical Classification Systems (IOMC/CG-HCCS). She congratulated all organizations, bodies and individuals involved in the development of the GHS for their achievements, in particular the Chairperson of the IOMC/CG-HCCS, Ms. J. Silk (United States of America) and its Secretary, Mr. I. Obadia (ILO). She recalled that the Sub-Committee had been created pursuant to the Economic and Social Council's resolution 1999/65 with the mandate to act as custodian of the GHS, to keep it up to date and to promote its effective implementation. She also informed the Sub-Committee that the substantive secretariat services for the Sub-Committee would be provided by the UNECE Transport Division Dangerous Goods and Special Cargoes Section, and that additional resources had been allocated to that Section on a temporary basis for 2001 pending approval by the General Assembly of the UNECE proposed 2002-2003 budget programme, where a post of Secretary of the Sub-Committee had been provided for. She assured the Sub-Committee that the UNECE Secretariat would do the utmost to provide the best secretariat services pending regularization of the situation.

3. The representative of ILO expressed his sincere thanks to the three IOMC/CG-HCCS focal points for having completed their contribution to the GHS. He recalled that this completion would bring an end to a process initiated by ILO and he said that he was confident that the Sub-Committee would efficiently assume its role in this new process of implementation and updating of the GHS.

ATTENDANCE

4. Experts from the following countries took part in the session: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Czech Republic, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, South Africa, Sweden, United Kingdom and United States of America.

5. Under rule 72 of the Rules of Procedure of the Economic and Social Council, observers from the following countries took part: China, Mexico, Portugal and Switzerland.

6. Representatives of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and of the following specialized agencies were present: International Labour Office (ILO) and International Maritime Organization (IMO).

7. The following intergovernmental organizations were represented: Commission of the European Communities (CEC) and Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD).

8. Representatives of the following non-governmental organizations took part in the discussion of items of concern to their organizations: Compressed Gas Association (CGA), European Chemical Industry Council (CEFIC), European Industrial Gases Association (EIGA), Federation of European Aerosol

Associations (FEA), Hazardous Materials Advisory Council (HMAC), International Association of the Soap, Detergent and Maintenance Products Industry (AISE), International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA), International Organization for Standardization (ISO), International Paint and Printing Ink Council (IPPIC), International Petroleum Industry Environmental Conservation Association (IPIECA), International Technical Committee for the Prevention and Extinction of Fire (CTIF), Soap and Detergent Association (SDA), and International Union of Railways (UIC).

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Documents: ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/1 (Secretariat)

Informal documents : INF.1 and INF.2 (Secretariat)

9. The Sub-Committee adopted the provisional agenda prepared by the secretariat with the addition of the late informal documents listed in INF.1 and INF.2.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK

Membership of the Sub-Committee

Document: ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/8 (Secretariat)

10. The Sub-Committee noted that the Economic and Social Council had accepted on 3 May 2001 all applications for membership in the Sub-Committee which had been submitted in due time for its organizational session for 2001.

11. The Sub-Committee also noted that the Council had decided that all members of the GHS Sub-Committee or of the Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (TDG Sub-Committee) would also be members of the Committee.

12. The Sub-Committee further noted that, since then, three member States of the United Nations had informed the secretariat that they intended to apply for membership in the GHS Sub-Committee and that, once formally received by the Executive Secretary of the UNECE, their applications would be submitted in due time to the Council through the Secretary-General, together with other applications if any.

Terms of reference

Document: ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/7 (Secretariat)

13. The Sub-Committee took note of the background information provided by the Secretariat with respect to its terms of reference, as reflected in Council's resolution 1999/65 of 26 October 2000 (annex 1) which had been adopted on the basis of a proposal elaborated by the IOMC Coordinating Group and submitted to the Council by the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Forum for Chemical Safety (IFCS) (annex 2).

Rules of procedures of the Economic and Social Council

Document: ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/1 (Secretariat)

14. The Sub-Committee noted that in accordance with Rule 27, para. 1, Chapters VI and VIII to XII of the Rules of Procedures of the Economic and Social Council applied to its proceedings.

Other administrative matters

Document: ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/6 (Secretariat)

15. The Sub-Committee was informed of various other rules that will apply to its proceedings, notably with respect to intersessional work, documentation, interpretation, reports, publications, organization of meetings and consultation with non-governmental organizations.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

16. On a proposal by the expert from the United States of America, Ms. K. Headrick (Canada) was elected Chairperson of the Sub-Committee for 2001-2002.

17. On a proposal by the expert from Belgium, Ms. A.L. Sundquist (Finland) was elected Vice-Chairperson of the Sub-Committee for 2001-2002.

18. The expert from Belgium also proposed that a second vice-chairperson should be elected. The expert from the United States of America suggested that this second vice-chairperson should be elected amongst experts from developing countries. The Sub-Committee agreed with this suggestion and decided that a second vice-chairperson should be elected at the next session after further consultation with experts from developing countries.

REQUESTS FOR CONSULTATIVE STATUS (NGOs)

Document: ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/2 (Secretariat)

19. The Sub-Committee took note of Council resolution 1996/31 which governs the arrangements to be made for consultation with non-governmental organizations.

Document: ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/18 (Secretariat)

20. The Sub-Committee noted that in accordance with the above arrangements, all non-governmental organizations in general or special consultative status with the Economic and Social Council and those on the Roster which presently participate in the work of the Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods or of the IOMC Coordinating Group had been informed of the provisional agenda for this session and had been invited to participate as observers for matters within their field of competence.

Requests from non-governmental organizations which are not in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

Documents: ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/9 (ICCR)
ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/10 (UIC, FEA)
ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/12 (CGA)
ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/15 (EIGA)
ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/16 (SDA)
ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/17 (IPPIC)

Informal document: INF.3 (CTIF)

21. The Sub-Committee noted that since Chapter XIII of the Rules of Procedures of the Economic and Social Council did not apply to its proceedings, non-governmental organizations which are not in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council could participate in its deliberations on matters within their competence only if the Sub-Committee so decided. In considering applications from such

organizations, the principles laid down in Parts I and II of the Council resolution 1996/31 should be duly taken into account.

22. Bearing in mind paragraph 19 of resolution 1996/31, the Sub-Committee considered that a proliferation of non-governmental organizations participating in its work should be avoided, and that preference should be given to international organizations.

23. Recognizing, however, that international organizations did not exist in all fields of relevance to the GHS, the Sub-Committee agreed that regional, sub-regional and national organizations could also participate, but when several such organizations had similar objectives they should be invited to form a joint committee to coordinate their positions.

24. The Sub-Committee agreed that CGA, CTIF, EIGA, FEA, ICCR, IPPIC, SDA and UIC could participate in its deliberations at such meetings that are convened with matters within their field of competence.

GLOBALLY HARMONIZED SYSTEM OF CLASSIFICATION AND LABELLING OF CHEMICALS (GHS)

Work of the IOMC Coordinating Group

Document: ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/13 (Secretariat)

Informal document: INF.8 (ILO)

25. The Sub-Committee took note of the provisional record on the eighteenth consultation of the IOMC Coordinating Group held at ILO Headquarters in Geneva from 24-25 May 2001. The Sub-Committee noted that this was the last meeting of the IOMC Coordinating Group but that further work was going on by e-mail consultation for the development of a final GHS document which would take account of the inputs from the three focal points. The draft document should be ready in time for discussion at the December 2001 Sub-Committee session.

Work of the ILO Working Group for the Harmonization of Chemical Hazard Communication

Informal documents: INF.6 (ILO)
INF.9 (ILO)

26. The Sub-Committee took note of the draft record of the seventh meeting of the ILO Working group (Geneva, 21-24 May 2001), which was the last meeting of that group.

27. A large majority of the ILO Working Group favoured using a diamond shape pictogram for the purpose of hazard communication, but since some concerns had been raised by the International Air Transport Association (IATA) in this respect, the issue had been referred to the TDG Sub-Committee for advice.

28. The expert from Italy, as Chairman of the TDG Sub-Committee, said that the issue had been discussed by the TDG Sub-Committee at its nineteenth session (2-6 July 2001), and that the Sub-Committee had decided at a large majority to support the ILO proposal for a diamond shape pictogram for all GHS purposes. Since a decision had already been taken by the TDG Sub-Committee, it was possible to continue work on the GHS document without awaiting further discussion on this issue at the next December TDG Sub-Committee session.

29. On a question from the expert from Germany, the expert from the United States of America, as Chairman of the IOMC Coordinating Group, said that this matter would now have to be discussed by the IOMC Coordinating Group since other participants in that group might have a different view on this question.

30. The experts from Germany and the Netherlands did not agree with this conclusion, since the diamond shape pictogram had been agreed by a large majority of the ILO Working Group subject to the advice from the TDG Sub-Committee, which was clearly positive.

31. Some experts also noted that the question of development of a new symbol to be used for specific chronic health hazards not subject to the transport of dangerous goods regulations had not yet been concluded. The Chairperson informed the Sub-Committee that this issue is also being addressed in the IOMC Coordinating Group.

32. The observer from Switzerland expressed concern at the use of the same diamond shape in the GHS as in transport of dangerous goods regulations, as well as at the use of signal words and precautionary statements in the GHS label. He would have preferred the use of appropriate symbols for hazard communication since it was not clear, especially in regions such as Europe where many different languages are used, in which language such words and statements would be required.

33. Other experts considered that the language problem would have to be addressed indeed, but this was more an implementation matter rather than a GHS development issue. The Chairperson said that the Sub-Committee was not competent to deal with this question at this point and that it would be advisable to wait for the final GHS proposal before considering that issue.

34. The representative of OECD expressed some concern at these discussions. In his view, the agreements reached by the various focal points should not be taken as still open for discussion.

35. The Chairperson reminded the Sub-Committee that the final IOMC Coordinating Group proposal had not yet been available and that it would be easier to have a clearer view of the overall situation at the next session.

Work of the OECD on health hazards and hazards to the environment

Documents: ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/4 (OECD)
ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/11 (OECD)

36. The representative of OECD informed the Sub-Committee that the documents submitted reflected the OECD situation as of 27 April 2001, but that further discussion had taken place since then in particular with respect to chemical mixtures which cause skin and eye corrosion/irritation and hazards to the aquatic environment and with respect to two guidance documents on classification of substances hazardous to the environment and on transformation/dissolution of metals and metal components in aqueous media respectively. He said that a revised integrated document would be submitted to the IOMC Coordinating Group in a few weeks time. This revised document will be made available on the UNECE website as INF.14.

Work of the joint UN/ILO Working Group for the classification of chemicals presenting physical hazards

Document: ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/3 (Secretariat)

Informal document: INF.10 (Secretariat)

37. The Sub-Committee was informed that the UN/ILO Working Group had completed its work on physical hazards by adoption of a compromise solution for flammable aerosols on 5 July 2001 during the nineteenth session of the TDG Sub-Committee. This also included the hazard communication elements. It was also agreed that the divisions 1.1 to 1.6 for explosives and the types A to G for self-reactives and for organic peroxides should be inserted in the GHS (see ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/38/Add.2).

38. The Sub-Committee also noted that the secretariat had prepared the relevant chapters (INF.10) for integration into the IOMC Coordinating Group document on the GHS, but that this document had still to be completed by relevant guidance and examples and by the criteria and hazard communication elements for flammable aerosols.

COOPERATION WITH UNITED NATIONS ORGANS AND PROGRAMMES, SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONS

Cooperation with the focal points of the IOMC Coordinating Group

Informal document: INF.5 (Brazil, Canada, Finland, Ireland, United Kingdom and United States of America)

INF.11 (Italy)

INF.12 (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, United States of America and ICCA)

39. The purpose of this informal document was to acknowledge the work completed by the focal points and the IOMC Coordinating Group, to note the continuing work to complete the GHS, and to recognize the role of the focal points in updating the system in the future. It was proposed in particular to request the focal points to complete their task and invite them to play the same role as up to now in the development of new criteria and hazard communication elements and updating the GHS.

40. Several experts considered that the Sub-Committee had not been created to replace the IOMC Coordinating Group and to continue the existing arrangements. They felt that the Sub-Committee had the mandate to update the GHS, and although cooperation with other organizations was recognized under this mandate, the Sub-Committee should remain the decision-making body and should delegate some of the tasks to other organizations only if these tasks could not be carried out under its own auspices. They recalled that the existing Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods made use of sessional working groups and of informal intersessional working groups hosted by Governments or the industry for expert work. They felt that such working groups could be hosted by other organizations, provided that they reported back and worked under the control of the Sub-Committee.

41. After lengthy debates on this issue, a proposal was made by Italy in informal document INF.11. After discussion of this proposal, a group of experts from Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, United Kingdom, United States of America and ICCA was convened to prepare a compromise position (INF.12), which was endorsed by the Sub-Committee, as follows in paragraphs 42 and 43.

42. The Sub-Committee recognized that sometimes it might be necessary to use the resources of other organizations to assist the Sub-Committee. On that basis, and taking into account the work going on in different organizations, the Sub-Committee:

- (a) Invited the IOMC CG/HCCS to submit as an official document for the December 2001 session of the Sub-Committee a draft of the GHS document;
- (b) Invited OECD to finalize the work on classification criteria for:
 - aspiration hazards;
 - respiratory irritation hazards;
 - water-activated toxics;and to submit corresponding proposals for the December 2002 session of the GHS Sub-Committee;
- (c) Invited OECD to investigate the need to address narcotic effects for classification purposes;
- (d) Recognizing the specific expertise of OECD, ILO, TDG Sub-Committee, UNITAR and other organizations, invited these organizations (focal points) to be involved in the work on GHS.

43. The Committee agreed that:

- (a) Future work by the appropriate focal points will be based on proposals from the Sub-Committee, specifying scope of the work and timescale;
- (b) Participants in the Sub-Committee that have not been involved in the work of the focal points should be invited to participate in the ongoing and future work of these focal points;
- (c) Focal points should report to the Sub-Committee on the progress of the work at each meeting and submit their proposals to the Sub-Committee in accordance with the timescale envisaged by the Sub-Committee, with due respect to the existing rules for document submission.

World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio + 10), Johannesburg, 2-11 September 2002

Document: ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/14 (Secretariat)

44. The Sub-Committee took note of a report by the Secretary-General on the Management of Toxic Chemicals and Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes which had been submitted to the Economic and Social Council's Commission on Sustainable Development acting as the Preparatory Committee of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Prepcom 1, New York, 30 April-2 May 2001).

45. The expert from Italy noted that this report also covered Chapters 20 and 21 of Agenda 21, i.e. hazardous wastes. He recalled that under the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, hazardous wastes of Annex III, categories H1 to H8, are subject to the classification criteria of the UN Recommendations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods. He felt that it would be necessary to see how the Basel Convention criteria for all categories H1 to H13

could be harmonized with the GHS, and to cooperate with the Conference of Parties to the Basel Convention in this respect.

46. The experts from Greece and Germany supported this view, and the expert from Germany underlined that the work presently carried out by the Contracting Parties to the Basel Convention for classification criteria of categories H10 to H13 did not take account of the GHS criteria.

47. The Chairperson said that this question could be a proposed item for the future programme of work.

48. The representative of the European Commission said that he did not feel it necessary to deal with hazardous wastes under the GHS work.

IMPLEMENTATION

Document: ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/5 (Germany)

Informal document: INF.7 (UNITAR)
INF.13 (UNITAR)

49. The expert from Germany drew attention to activities planned by UNITAR and ILO for implementing the GHS at national level. He said that Germany was interested and willing to work in such a project and to give financial and expert assistance to activities described in ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2001/5, in particular for workshops. He invited other countries to contribute to the project by written contributions and financing/co-financing workshops and related capacity-building activities.

50. The representative of UNITAR explained that the projects were country-based pilot projects designed in three phases, and he said that a first pilot project could start in Zambia in 2001. Guidance material is under preparation for these projects, and the projects could be improved or modified once experience has been gained with the first pilot countries. Feedback to the Sub-Committee could also be expected, e.g. from national testing of comprehensibility of graphic symbols, etc.

51. The expert from Argentina expressed thanks to the expert from Germany and the representative of UNITAR for the documents presented and stressed the need for capacity building in developing countries and countries in transition, particularly in the area of implementation.

52. Several other experts expressed interest and support for these capacity building initiatives.

53. The expert from Italy recalled that, during a certain transition time, the existing national or regional systems of classification and labelling of chemicals and the international scheme of regulations for the transport of dangerous goods would remain legally applicable, and this should be taken into account in these initiatives to avoid disruption in international trade operations.

54. The Sub-Committee agreed that it would have to consider the question of timescale for implementation. UNITAR should seek advice from the Sub-Committee in this respect, and it would also be desirable that the training guidance developed under these projects be presented to the Sub-Committee.

55. The expert from Germany suggested that the UNITAR projects address not only the safety of use of chemicals at work aspects, but also the transport of dangerous goods aspects of the GHS.

56. The representative of UNITAR informed the Sub-Committee that an advisory meeting on these projects would be convened in September 2001 and those interested in participating should contact him (INF.13).

57. On a question by the expert from Germany, representatives from AISE, CEFIC, CGA, EIGA and IPPIC indicated that they intended to prepare information and/or guidance for their members for preparing the implementation of the GHS. They were invited to keep the Sub-Committee informed and to provide documentation on the guidance which could be more widely used if necessary under capacity building projects.

58. On a question by the representative of UIC, the Chairperson confirmed that a document of a substantive size on the GHS was under preparation, that it would be submitted to the next session of the Sub-Committee and that it was the intention to publish it as a UN publication, although the details of such a publication still had to be discussed. She said that this publication could not yet be related to Part 2 of the Model Regulations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods (Orange Book) since this Part had not yet been brought in line with the GHS.

59. The representative of ILO and the expert from the United States of America said that the IOMC was prepared to publish the IOMC proposal for the GHS document. The representatives of ILO and OECD noted that this document would be made available as a CD-Rom and would be submitted to the GHS Sub-Committee in time for the December 2001 meeting.

60. The representative of ILO said that he would consult IOMC on the possibility of providing assistance for translation of the GHS document into French and Spanish.

61. The representative of IMO said that, for the purpose of global harmonization, IMO was already aligning its classification criteria for the carriage of chemicals in chemical tankers with the GHS.

WORK PROGRAMME FOR THE BIENNIUM

62. The Sub-Committee agreed that the work programme for its second, third and fourth sessions should be as follows:

- (a) Receive and adopt the complete work on the GHS (2nd, 3rd and 4th sessions);
- (b) Receive reports from the focal points on progress and completion of on-going work (2nd, 3rd and 4th sessions) e.g.:
 - (i) OECD work on classification criteria for aspiration, respiratory irritation, water-activated toxics;
 - (ii) TDG Sub-Committee: flammability criteria for aerosols;
- (c) Consider the need for work on classification criteria for narcotic effects (2nd session);
- (d) Consider and coordinate future capacity building initiatives (2nd, 3rd, 4th sessions) and make the results available;
- (e) Consider future cooperation with focal points;
- (f) Develop the strategy for implementation of the GHS and make the results available (2nd, 3rd, 4th sessions);
- (g) Identify any remaining outstanding work required on
 - (i) chemical classification;

- (ii) hazard communication;
(4th session)
- (h) Consider future publication of the GHS (2nd, 3rd and 4th sessions);
- (i) Prepare recommendations for coordination with the TDG Sub-Committee for approval by the Committee (4th session);
- (j) Prepare a recommendation for the Committee's endorsement of its work during the 2001-2002 biennium (4th session);
- (k) Prepare a programme of work for 2003-2004 for consideration by the Committee and further approval by the Council (4th session);
- (l) Prepare a draft ECOSOC resolution for consideration by the Committee and further approval by the Council (4th session) in view of the publication and implementation of the GHS.

63. The Sub-Committee was informed that the deadline for submitting documents for the next session was 21 September 2001 (26 October 2001 if submitted simultaneously in English and French).

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT

64. The Sub-Committee adopted the report on its first session on the basis of a draft prepared by the secretariat.
