

**Sub-Committee of Experts on the Globally  
Harmonized System of Classification  
and Labelling of Chemicals**  
(Second session, 12-14 December 2001,  
agenda item 4)

INTERNATIONAL LABOUR OFFICE

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282nd Session

Governing Body

Geneva, November 2001

TENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

## **Report of the Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues**

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72. *The Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues recommends that the Governing Body –*

- (a) take note of the report of the third session of the Working Group;*
- (b) approve the actions set out in paragraph 4; and*
- (c) approve the holding of a fourth session of the Working Group, with participation by the eight ILO (four shipowner and four seafarer) representatives, at no cost to the ILO, in mid-2002, with the terms of reference provided in paragraph 5.*

## **VI. Report of the ILO Working Group on Harmonization of Chemical Hazard Communication**

73. The Committee had before it the report of the ILO Working Group on Harmonization of Chemical Hazard Communication. <sup>11</sup>
74. A representative of the Director-General, Mr. Obadia, Coordinator, Occupational Health Cluster, SafeWork, stated that the overall work on the elaboration of a globally harmonized system (GHS) was a good example of the wide international cooperation in developing a major tool with global coverage. The output of the Working Group was an essential and most visible element. It took 12 years, the participation of 300 experts in over 150 meetings, and the production of at least 1,000 documents and reports. Now that the GHS has become a United Nations standard, it was expected to have far-reaching impact at both national and international levels, as it created a unified basis for chemical hazard communication for the workplace, consumer transport and the environment resulting in improved protection. It also resulted in the facilitation of trade as well as the reduction of testing on animals by improving mutual acceptance of hazard data.
75. Mr. Zellhoefer expressed his satisfaction on behalf of the Workers' group, not only for the achievement of a GHS, but also for the political and technical leadership that the ILO had shown in initiating and bringing the process to completion. They expected the same kind of commitment in providing technical assistance to developing countries in order for them to upgrade or establish chemical hazard communication systems, in working with UNITAR and UNDP to develop an action plan and in working with the ICEM and other unions in the sector to implement the system's recommendations.
76. Mr. Jeetun commended the Office for the completion of 12 years of work and noted with satisfaction that the Employers' group approved the report. He stressed that the ILO should continue to provide assistance to developing countries and promote what had been achieved.
77. The representative of the Government of Germany indicated that the technical experts had requested him to not only support the point for decision, but to also reiterate his Government's support of the work of the Office.

78. The representative of the Government of the United Kingdom recognized and commended the ILO's vital contribution to the work on GHS, and endorsed the recommendation in paragraph 12 of the report. Her Government was fully committed to the work on GHS and had played an active part in taking all aspects of this work forward, including implementation and the work of the UN subcommittee. In addition, the United Kingdom recognized the need for training and, although resources had already been committed, it would consider any proposals for capacity building.
79. The representative of the Government of the United States stated that his country was an early and active participant in this process, and was very pleased to see its conclusion. He commended the ILO for its long-term support, in particular Mr. Obadia who served as the secretary for the coordinating group and the Working Group on Hazard Communication. He noted the potentially positive impact on workers worldwide who were currently exposed to hazardous chemicals but who did not have the information necessary to ensure their safe use. The United States supported the continuation of the important work of classifying and labelling such chemicals in an integrated and coherent manner. Furthermore, his Government supported providing additional resources for the capacity-building phase of the GHS.
80. The spokesperson for the African Government group stated that his group had taken note of the successful completion of the work undertaken, believed in a GHS system and supported the recommendations made by other Committee members.
81. ***The Committee on Sectoral and Technical Meetings and Related Issues recommends that the Governing Body –***
- (a) take note of the successful completion of the task given to the ILO Working Group on Harmonization of Chemical Hazard Communication;***
  - (b) take note of the establishment of a new United Nations body to maintain and update the globally harmonized system for the classification of labelling of chemicals;***
  - (c) endorse the work of the ILO Working Group.***

Geneva, 9 November 2001.

*(Signed)* Mr. Rimkunas,  
Chairperson.

*Points for decision:*

- Paragraph 12;
- Paragraph 18;
- Paragraph 37;
- Paragraph 50;
- Paragraph 55;
- Paragraph 60;
- Paragraph 65;
- Paragraph 72;
- Paragraph 81.

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