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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
(Fourth session, 9-11 December 2002
agenda item 3)

PROGRAMME OF WORK FOR THE BIENNIUM 2003-2004

Environmental Hazard Classification: Hazard for the Terrestrial Environment

Transmitted by the experts from Austria, Greece, New Zealand and Spain

Introduction

In the current GHS, the environmental hazards section considers exclusively toxicity data on aquatic organisms. The hazards related to other environmental compartments, particularly those referring to terrestrial systems, are included in the current system. The need for expanding the current classification scheme has been discussed in different occasions.

Proposal

To include the further development of the classification scheme to cover hazards for the terrestrial environment in the list of priorities for future work in the workplan for 2003-2004

Justification

The aims and benefits related to an environmental hazard classification system require a holistic approach covering all potentially endangered environmental compartments. Since most available information and criteria focus on the aquatic compartment, it was logical to start the environmental classification scheme with the hazards for aquatic organisms.

It has been clearly demonstrated that the application of an aquatic hazard scheme does not overrule the need for a holistic approach covering the terrestrial compartment. Different programs at the national and international level have identified chemicals that do not require a hazard classification based on aquatic toxicity but must be considered highly toxic for terrestrial organisms.

Hazard Identification schemes are expected to be a key tool in screening and priority setting strategies. Therefore, these schemes must offer a broad perspective of potential hazards, well balanced among the different environmental compartments.

The scientific and technical bases for the identification of hazards to terrestrial organisms have experienced -significant progress in recent years. The available information will allow the discussion of this issue in the GHS context during the next biennium.
