

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
(Seventh session, 14-16 July 2004,
agenda item 5)

CAPACITY BUILDING

Activities of the UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme and UNITAR/ILO/OECD WSSD
Global GHS Partnership

Transmitted by UNITAR

1. This document provides an update regarding activities in the UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme and the UNITAR/ILO/OECD WSSD Global GHS Partnership for the period January – July 2004.

UNITAR/ILO Capacity Building Programme Activities

Country-based Activities

2. The two pilot countries, Zambia and South Africa, continue their work on developing national chemical hazard communication and GHS implementation strategies, though the formal projects supported by UNITAR have now ended.

3. In Zambia, all relevant ministries have been engaged in the executive process to change/amend the sectoral legislation that exists based on the proposals developed in the project in order to realise Zambia's commitment to the international target of GHS implementation by 2008. A number of supporting activities have also been completed, including (i) a brochure on chemical hazard communication and the GHS has been developed and 10,000 copies widely distributed; (ii) Zambia is applying for formal membership to the UN SCEGHS, in which they participated as observers during the UNITAR-supported project; (iii) a programme curriculum has been developed for a formal, certificate-based training programme (“Chemicals and Environmental Management Diploma Course” at the University of Zambia) to include training on labels and the GHS. Three lecturers are involved and the course with about 20-25 students will officially begin in September 2005.

4. In South Africa, the strategy for implementing the GHS was tabled at the National Economic Development and Labour Council (NEDLAC) and discussions took place in a tripartite task team comprising representatives of all relevant regulatory authorities, industry and labour. The agreement is now being incorporated in a sectoral agreement between the chemical industry, government and labour to promote the global competitiveness of the industry. Two follow-up activities are also underway: (i) development of a national standard that will contain all the requirements of the GHS and, in parallel, development of a guideline document to support implementation of the standard; (ii) development of training standards required for GHS implementation will be incorporated in the chemical sector skills plan for the period 2005–2009; and (iii) stakeholders have agreed that the timing of GHS implementation in South Africa must be aligned with the timing of implementation of its major trading partners. The representative of South Africa may wish to add further information.

5. With the support of the Government of Switzerland, Thailand and Senegal are expected to initiate new country-based pilot projects later in 2004 in the context of the UNITAR/ILO Programme.

An additional pilot country will be added subsequent to further discussions and UNITAR will provide a further update at the next Subcommittee session.

6. UNITAR has initiated a dialogue with the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) to support a second round of country-based pilot projects based on a public-private partnership. UNITAR will update the Subcommittee if and when further details become available.

7. The UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme Advisory Group (PAG) continues to meet to review programme documents, ensure complementarity with other chemical hazard communication initiatives and provide overall guidance regarding Programme implementation.

Regional Activities

8. The SADC GHS needs assessment and implementation report has been developed in draft form and been circulated for comment to workshop participants and other stakeholders in the region. It is expected that this report will be finalised by September 2004 and inform the development of the Regional GHS implementation strategy for SADC.

9. With support of GTZ and hosted by the Government of Brazil, the second in the series of UNITAR/ILO regional GHS workshops will take place from 18-21 October 2004. Ten countries of the Mercosur and Andean Community regions will be invited, along with other stakeholders. A regional survey, followed by a regional GHS needs assessment and implementation report, are also planned.

10. UNITAR, in cooperation with the Ministry of Environment of Japan, will undertake a survey related to GHS implementation and capacity needs in countries of the Asia-Pacific region in the second half of 2004. It is expected that the results of the survey will be available in time for reporting to the December 2004 session of the SCEGHS.

Development of Guidance and Training Materials

11. Based on the comprehensibility testing undertaken in both Zambia and South Africa, a draft GHS "comprehensibility training package" has been developed by the University of Cape Town. The purpose of the package was pilot training on chemical hazard communication comprehension that could support GHS implementation. The training project:

(a) Developed hazard communication training materials adapted to the South African situation at the grass roots level for the three areas of industrial chemicals, agricultural chemicals, and chemicals in transport. A formal training guide was also developed for industry, transport and agricultural sectors.

(b) Developed and tested a radio feature (a lunch-time talk show on Bush Radio, Cape Town) and distributed a newspaper insert on chemical hazard communication (a news article on the GHS was run in a number of community newspapers).

(c) Completed hazard communication training, including evaluation of the effectiveness of various training interventions, for approximately 100 workers and consumers. For consumers, the radio programme talk show described above was aired over four successive weeks, once a week, alternating between English and Xhosa (the indigenous African language of the majority of black listeners in Cape Town). The particular station on which this radio time was achieved, estimates that its listenership was approximately 250 000 people.

(d) Developed and distributed two training label cards: (1) the pesticide label card which explains the pictograms and colour codes commonly used on pesticide labels in South Africa, and (2) the GHS label card which gives the new GHS proposed symbols and their definitions, along with the GHS signal words. Approximately 5000 cards were distributed to 50 chemical and transport companies.

Pesticide label cards were distributed to the farm on which the agricultural groups were held. Approximately 410 cards were distributed to 40 large, small-scale and state farms.

Supporting Services

12. The GHS Action Plan adopted by IFCS Forum IV in Bangkok, Thailand in November 2003 requested UNITAR/ILO, as the focal point for capacity building in the UN SCEGHS, and in collaboration with the Sub-committee, to develop a roster of GHS experts who can provide support on training and capacity building activities on the application of GHS classification, labelling, and safety data sheets by the end of 2004. UNITAR has initiated development of the roster and will provide an update to the Subcommittee regarding its status in December 2004.

13. The UNITAR/ILO Programme is contributing to the finalization of the GHS document in Spanish by the secretariat of the SCE GHS through support of two national experts (from Argentina and Chile). Translation of GHS documents into languages was strongly supported by the First Meeting of the Partners of the WSSD Global Partnership.

14. At the Thematic Workshop on Synergies for Capacity Building under International Agreements Addressing Chemicals and Waste Management, hosted by UNITAR in March 2004 in Geneva, participants recognised that implementation at the national level of the GHS could support integrated implementation of agreements by acting as a broad-based “building block” for strengthening chemicals management. Building capacity in the areas of classification, labeling and SDS development is an opportunity to build synergy across agreements. Implementation of the GHS in countries and enterprises would considerably enhance the overall capacity of government institutions and the private sector to perform hazard assessment as well as manage chemical risks. Chemicals addressed under other international agreements should be classified and labelled using the GHS to provide a harmonised approach at the international level. Further information about the results of this workshop can be found at the workshop website: www.unitar.org/cwm/c/tw/ws8/index.htm.

WSSD Global Partnership for Capacity Building to Implement the GHS

15. The Annual Report 2003 for the Partnership, which contains a review of 2003 activities and an outline of planned activities for 2004-2005, has been prepared with input from Partners and reviewed by the UNITAR/ILO Programme Advisory Group. The Report will be available by the end of July 2004.

16. In addition to 2003-2004 contributions from the Government of Switzerland for financial support to UNITAR/ILO implemented Partnership activities, including the Partnership Secretariat and national GHS implementation projects, UNITAR is pleased to acknowledge the 2004 financial support of the United States for UNITAR/ILO implemented Partnership activities in recognition of activities to promote and implement the GHS, in particular awareness raising and training workshops in developing countries. In addition, UNITAR/ILO and the European Commission are working on an agreement for GHS capacity building in the ASEAN region (Association of Southeast Asian Nations) for 2005; more details will be provided at the December session of the Subcommittee.

17. GHS capacity building activities organized by UNITAR/ILO continue to be funded by extra-budgetary resources. UNITAR/ILO welcome suggestions and proposals from the SCEGHS regarding how to realize this objective of ensuring sustainable core funding both to support Partnership activities and to provide the functions of the Partnership Secretariat.

18. UNITAR will continue to update the SCEGHS on these activities over the course of the next year.
