

## 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

Transport of Dangerous Goods

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### BUILDING BLOCK APPROACH: GUIDANCE AND IMPLEMENTATION

Guidance on the GHS building block approach

Transmitted by the expert from Sweden

#### **Issue:**

1. Guidance on the application of the *building block approach* included in the GHS document.

#### **Existing situation**

2. In section 1.1.3 'Application of the GHS' the building block approach is explained in 1.1.3.1.5. It has been argued that these paragraphs do not sufficiently explain the building block approach and the need for guidance on the interpretation of the approach has been recognized.
3. A text proposal to amend 1.1.3.1.5 has been transmitted by the expert from Canada, in order to clarify what is covered by the building block approach and how it is meant to be applied for the application of the GHS.

#### **Comments on the proposal transmitted by the expert from Canada**

##### *Comments on proposed text for paragraphs 1.1.3.1.5.1 to 1.1.3.1.5.3*

4. An alternative text for paragraphs 1.1.3.1.5.1 to 1.1.3.1.5.3 elaborating around whether each Competent Authority is expected to adopt each GHS hazard class and also each category within each hazard class is proposed by the Expert from Canada.
5. We are afraid that the interpretation made by Canada and the proposed revision of current GHS text would undermine the possibilities for global harmonisation not only between sectors but also within a sector.
6. The Canadian proposal opens up for Competent Authorities to freely chose between both classes **and categories** in a way that was not the original idea. If it would be up to each Competent Authority to choose between categories e.g. to allow an actor to continue to include only those categories currently covered in their system when the GHS is implemented

for a specific sector, then it would make no sense to specify in the chapters for the classification criteria that a particular category is not normally used in a specified sector or that it is anticipated that its use is restricted to a specific regulatory system. There are yet several examples in the GHS text where this is the case, e.g. classification and labelling requirements not required under the *UN Recommendations for the Transport of Dangerous Goods, Model Regulations* (e.g. Category 2 of Flammable Gases<sup>1</sup>, Category 4 of Flammable Liquids<sup>2</sup>, Chronic Categories 3 and 4 of Aquatic Toxicity<sup>3</sup>), and certain Acute Categories of Aquatic Toxicity<sup>4</sup>, not normally used when considering packaged goods and/or anticipated use restricted to regulatory systems concerning bulk transport.

***Comments on proposed paragraphs 1.1.3.1.5.4 to 1.1.3.1.5.4.7***

7. In addition to a revision of paragraphs 1.1.3.1.5.1 to 1.1.3.1.5.3 Canada has proposed to add four new paragraphs (1.1.3.1.5.4 to 1.1.3.1.5.4.7) which we comment below:

“1.1.3.1.5.4 A hazard category is based on one single set of criteria in order to assure a sufficient degree of harmonization between sectors. Standardized label elements which have been assigned to each category should be used only for that specific category.

**Comment:** We suggest to amend this proposed paragraph to clarify what a hazard category consists of, in order to assure a sufficient degree of harmonization between sectors:

1.1.3.1.5.5 Once a hazard class ~~and category~~ is chosen by a sector and if that sector provides hazard information for that particular hazard, then the standardized GHS label elements, i.e., pictograms for all sectors and signal words and hazard statements for all sectors other than transport, would be expected as part of GHS implementation by that sector under the GHS.

**Comment:** Delete the wording “and category”. This, since a category is normally not considered as a building block (see previous comments).

~~1.1.3.1.5.6 — At the competent authority’s discretion, label information can be based on risk rather than hazard (see 1.4.10.5.5.2). In addition, competent authorities may require a Safety Data Sheet based on the GHS requirements.~~

**Comment:** The paragraph should not be included in the section on the building block approach because the text as it stands does not conform with Annex 5. Label information can be based on risk rather than hazard only under certain provisions specified in Annex 5. Risk-based labelling can only be applied by the competent authorities to the chronic health hazards (e.g. carcinogenicity, reproductive toxicity, or target organ systemic toxicity based on repeated exposure of chemicals) in the consumer product setting. The only chemicals it may be applied to are those in the consumer product setting where consumer exposures are generally limited in quantity and duration. These provisions are not found in the Canadian proposal.

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<sup>1</sup> Page 244, Annex 1, GHS.

<sup>2</sup> Note 2 to paragraphs 2.6.2 and 2.6.4.1, GHS. Also page 246, Annex 1, GHS.

<sup>3</sup> Page 262-263, Annex 1, GHS.

<sup>4</sup> Paragraph 4.1.2.4 and in Annex 9, paragraph A9.2.1, GHS.

~~1.1.3.1.5.7 — As long as the hazards covered by a sector or system are covered consistently with the GHS criteria and requirements, it will be considered appropriate implementation of the GHS. Notwithstanding the fact that an exporter needs to comply with importing countries' GHS implementation, it is hoped that the application of the GHS worldwide will eventually lead to a fully harmonized situation.”~~

**Comment:** The paragraph should not be included since this text is already part of paragraph 1.1.3.1.5.3 as adopted by the UN Economic and Social Council.

**Swedish proposal regarding Guidance on the GHS building block approach:**

8. For reasons given above, **Sweden do not support the proposal made by Canada**. Instead we suggest to:

- A. Keep the text of paragraphs 1.1.3.1.5.1 to 1.1.3.1.5.3** as currently adopted by the UN Economic and Social Council, but to **add a footnote to paragraph 1.1.3.1.5.1** in GHS, first sentence, to clarify the meaning of a ‘building block’, as follows:

“1.1.3.1.5.1 Consistent with the building block approach, countries are free to determine which of the *building blocks*<sup>1</sup> will be applied in different parts of their systems...”

that would say:

<sup>1</sup> *A building block refer normally to a hazard class, and not to an individual hazard category within a hazard class, if not otherwise specified. Existing regulatory schemes vary in their coverage and communication of hazards depending on the needs of target audiences/sectors. Therefore, in the GHS document, there are cases specified where classification and/or labelling requirements for a category within a hazard class is not required.*

- B. Add the following two new paragraphs:**

“1.1.3.1.5.4 A hazard category is based on one single set of criteria in order to assure a sufficient degree of harmonization between sectors. Standardized label elements which have been assigned to each category should be used only for that specific category.

1.1.3.1.5.5 Once a hazard class is chosen by a sector and if that sector provides hazard information for that particular hazard, then the standardized GHS label elements, i.e., pictograms for all sectors and signal words and hazard statements for all sectors other than transport, would be expected as part of GHS implementation by that sector under the GHS.”

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