

Self-Regulation of Environmental Management

**Guidelines set by world
industry associations for their
members' firms: An update**

1996–2003



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NOTE

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FOREWORD

Industry associations worldwide adopted guidelines for environmental management in the 1990s. This is to be welcomed, because when their member companies commit to regulating themselves, they can improve their efficiency and flexibility, reduce costs and facilitate compliance. Effective self-regulation, of course, is more than just the articulation of broad policies or guidelines. A number of conditions must be met, such as the formulation of substantive rules, active stakeholder consultation and commitment among all industry players.

An initial attempt to appraise the environmental guidelines of world industry associations was undertaken by UNCTAD in 1996 in its report entitled *Self-Regulation of Environmental Management: An Analysis of Guidelines set by World Industry Associations for their Member Firms*. This monograph is an update of the 1996 Self-Regulation Report. It examines the current guidelines of world industry associations. The major areas include global environmental management, environmentally sound production and consumption patterns, risks and hazards minimization, and full cost accounting. These priority areas, and the recommendations of Agenda 21 adopted at Rio de Janeiro in 1992, provide a normative benchmark for rating the industry guidelines.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A review of current industry guidelines suggests that the commitments to self-regulation that were made in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 have been strengthened by the major industry associations in some areas, but other areas have not been addressed.

In 1996, there were isolated policy areas among a handful of industry associations relating to issues such as transparency, stakeholder involvement, reporting and verification. By 2002, environmental management had become mainstreamed in industry association policy and activities.

In some cases, international industry associations have exceeded the policy recommendations of Agenda 21, especially in the area of global environmental management, where the policy focus is now on sustainable development. Engaging stakeholders in decision-making processes has emerged as an important concern within industry associations. Nevertheless, there is still divergent interest in dealing with environmentally sound production and consumption patterns.

The extractive industry sectors are beginning to address issues of risks and hazards minimization, although overall there has been little change in the last decade in this area. For example, items relating to phase-out (“elimination”) of hazardous waste and to full cost accounting received few policy commitments. In contrast, there is continued and increased interest in environmental reporting and in broadening stakeholder communication.

Overall, the series of United Nations conferences on environment and sustainable development such as Rio, Rio Plus 5 and the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg have played a crucial role in catalysing policy responses from industry associations. Agenda 21 has framed, and continues to frame, the development of self-regulation policy.

INTRODUCTION

The 1996 report on self-regulation¹ examined the published policy guidelines and codes of conduct of 56 industry associations, looking at seven in detail. The guidelines were evaluated for conformity with the relevant 32 provisions of Agenda 21 (see annex 1). This report is an update; it examines the most recent published information of the seven industry associations against the same benchmark.

The seven industry associations are:²

- International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)
- Canadian Chemical Producers' Association (CCPA)
- American Chemistry Council (ACC)
- Banks
- Keidanren (KEID) or Japan Federation of Economic Associations
- International Council on Metals and Mining (ICMM)
- World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC)

From Rio to Johannesburg: Evolution in industry policy

Self-regulation emerged as a dominant theme in the 1990s. Voluntary industry initiatives such as ISO 14001, the 1996 International Standard on Environmental Management Systems (EMS), dominate policy debates in the United States. In Europe, ISO 14001 replaced EMAS, the joint EU–industry programme to define an EMS that framed a voluntary corporate management system within a framework of governmental and public environmental objectives. At present, cross-sectoral international industry associations such as the ICC and Keidanren promote voluntary industrial action on environmental management. Sectoral domestic and international industry associations also argue that international environmental management is best achieved through voluntary industrial policy and programmes.

The catalytic role of the United Nations

At the same time, Agenda 21 and the related UN international conferences have played a catalytic role. There is a strong correlation between the dates of the Rio, Rio Plus 5 and Johannesburg

conferences on the one hand, and the issuance of industry association policy on environment and sustainable development on the other hand. There were major new policy initiatives by international industry associations around 1992, 1997 and 2002, as shown in chart 1. The full list of these policies, and other related publications, is provided in annex 5.

Among the seven core industry associations, policy on environment and sustainable development peaked in 1992, rose again in 1997 and escalated in 2002:

- Four produced policy documents in 1992/3, and then revised policy documents in 2000–2002: Keidanren, the banks, the ICC and the ICMM.
- Rio was used to launch the ICC Business Charter on Sustainable Development and the ICC brought out policy documents for Rio Plus 5 and for the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD).

Chart 1. Development of international industry association policy on environmental management and sustainable development



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