



Report from WHO Sessions on the WHO Chemicals Road Map at SAICM Regional Meetings

January – February 2018

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Background

SAICM and the Intersessional Process

The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) is a voluntary international policy framework to foster the sound management of chemicals worldwide and, specifically, to support multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder efforts toward the goal agreed at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development that, by the year 2020, chemicals are produced and used in ways that minimize significant adverse impacts on the environment and human health. Implementation of SAICM is overseen by the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) – a multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder forum.

With 2020 fast approaching, at its fourth session in 2015 the ICCM decided to initiate an intersessional process to prepare recommendations on SAICM and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 (the intersessional process). The outcome of the intersessional process will be presented at ICCM's fifth session in 2020 to enable the ICCM to take an informed decision on future arrangements.

SAICM Regional Meetings

In preparation for the second meeting of the intersessional process, and the third meeting of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG3), regional SAICM meetings were convened by the SAICM Secretariat in January and February 2018.

The objectives of the Regional Meetings were to:

- i. Facilitate the exchange of regional expertise and information, reviewing progress towards the SAICM 2020 objective; and
- ii. Enable strategic discussions to prepare for the second meeting of the intersessional process considering SAICM and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

WHO Chemicals Road Map

In May 2017, the 70th World Health Assembly (WHA) approved the *Road map to enhance health sector engagement in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management towards the 2020 goal and beyond* (the road map) that was requested by WHA69.4. The road map identifies concrete actions where the health sector has a lead or an important supporting role to play in the sound management of chemicals. It is intended to be a useful tool to assist ministries of health and other health sector stakeholders to identify areas of primary focus for engagement and additional actions, and to use this to define their own implementation plans for the road map, taking into account the need to engage and cooperate with others as appropriate. WHO has also developed a workbook that offers a structured way to work through the road map.

WHO Road Map Sessions

Given the relevance of the WHO Chemicals road map to the SAICM Regional Meeting objectives, WHO offered to host sessions on the road map and workbook at each SAICM Regional Meeting.

The sessions began with WHO providing an overview of the road map and introducing the workbook, as well considerations specific to each region were also highlighted. This was followed by a panel discussion on the experiences of the health sector with chemicals management and the road map. A short summary of each of these sessions is provided below, noting that the WEOG region agenda was not able to accommodate a panel discussion.

Asia Pacific Region, Bangkok Thailand, 23-25 January 2108

Session host: Liviu Vedrasco, WHO Country Office, Thailand

Panelists: Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and the Chulabhorn Research Institute

Summary:

- The Philippines discussed how intersectoral cooperation on environment and health issues co-led by the health and environmental ministries has strengthened policies and programmes.
- Sri Lanka outlined recent activities launched by the health sector related to each of the action areas in the road map.
- Thailand described how the WHO Chemicals road map was used to guide the development of their Fifth National Strategic Plan on Chemicals Management.
- The Chulabhorn Research Institute, Regional Training Centre on Chemicals Safety and a WHO Collaborating Centre, provided an overview of its work in the WHO Chemicals Risk Assessment Network as examples of contributions to road map implementation.

An interactive exercise at the end of the session asked for examples of collaborative activities between health and environment. Examples included: assessing environmental risk factors for cancer clusters; changing harmful consumer behaviours; implementing the Minamata Convention on Mercury; restricting lead in paint; and managing medical waste.

Latin America and the Caribbean Region, Panama City, Panama, 29-31 January 2018

Session host: Ana Boischio, WHO Regional Office for the Americas/Pan American Health Organization

Panelists: Chile, Jamaica, Panama, Uruguay and Health Care Without Harm Costa Rica

Summary:

Chile mentioned their Program on Populations Exposed to Environmental Pollution, using risk assessment and management framework, including education and risk communication actions;

- Jamaica listed a series of ongoing activities regarding pediatric lead exposures and hospital chemical emergencies;
- Panama presented the sub regional multi sector workplan of synergies for chemical conventions involving different sectors in Central America and Dominican Republic;
- Uruguay shared their chemical agenda on strengthening the health sector in SAICM, participation in different GEF projects, with highlights on the pediatric programme on lead; and
- Health Care Without Harm shared their advances and challenges regarding replacement of mercury devices in health services, especially interim storage of thermometers in hospitals due to lack of solutions for final disposal .

All panelists expressed the use of the chemical road map as being instrumental in the implementation of their national chemical safety agenda.

Africa Region, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire, 6-8 February 2018

Session host: Kersten Gutschmidt, WHO Headquarters, Geneva

Panelists: Cote d'Ivoire, United Republic of Tanzania, Pesticide Action Network Africa

Summary:

- Panellists welcomed the WHO Chemicals road map and workbook for providing directions to the health sector to engage in chemicals management activities and to identify stakeholders and partners.
- Panellists agreed that the road map and workbook provide countries with a good framework to identify capacity gaps, develop action plans and to strengthen collaboration, coordination and networking.
- Panellists were also of the opinion that the road map provides relatively defined actions and activities for which funding proposals can be developed including budgets. As such, the road map is a good tool to inform proposal development and fund raising.
- In Cote d'Ivoire, the road map and workbook will be used to develop the National Health and Environment Plan (2018-2020), and in Tanzania, the road map helped to identify lead exposure as a public health issue requiring prompt action.
- The road map focuses on planning at national level. It is important that identified actions are implemented at all levels, i.e. it is at the local level that changes can make a huge difference to the health of people.

During the discussions, participants (nearly all from non-health sectors) re-iterated the importance of the health sector being involved in the management of chemicals and noted that health sector involvement is lacking in many countries in the region.

Central and Eastern Europe Region, (Lodz, Poland, 19-21 February 2018)

Session host: Irina Zastenskaya, WHO Regional Office for Europe

Panelists: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Ukraine, Hungary, Kyrgyzstan, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, IPEN Armenia

Summary:

Panelists discussed the following topics:

- Health sector priorities in countries
- Cooperation between health and other sectors: positive experience and negative experience
- WHO Chemicals road map value for non-governmental organizations

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