



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

FIFTY-NINTH WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY
Provisional agenda item 19

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Collaboration within the United Nations system and with other intergovernmental organizations, including United Nations reform process

Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management

Report by the Secretariat

1. As requested by resolution WHA56.22 on participation of global health partners in the development of the strategic approach, the completed Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management is herewith submitted to the Health Assembly for consideration. The Strategic Approach was completed and adopted by the International Conference on Chemicals Management (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 4-6 February 2006), whose participants included representatives of 151 governments, nine organizations of the United Nations system, eight intergovernmental organizations and 47 nongovernmental organizations. The Conference commended the Strategic Approach to the attention of the governing bodies of relevant intergovernmental organizations. The Governing Council of UNEP, at its 9th Special Session (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 7-9 February 2006) adopted a decision endorsing the completed Strategic Approach and the role and activities of UNEP in relation to its implementation.

Overview of the Strategic Approach

2. The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management comprises three core texts (see annexes 1-3): the Dubai Declaration on International Chemicals Management, the Overarching Policy Strategy and the Global Plan of Action. Among the resolutions adopted by the conference were decisions on implementation arrangements, the Quick Start Programme and the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety.

3. The Strategic Approach aims inter alia to meet the concern that chemicals continue to contaminate the environment worldwide, impairing the health and welfare of millions. It responds to the stated need to assess and manage chemicals more effectively in order to achieve the 2020 goal, articulated in paragraph 23 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation,¹ for the sound management of chemicals. The scope of the Strategic Approach includes (a) environmental, economic, social, health and labour aspects of chemical safety and (b) agricultural and industrial chemicals, with a view to promoting sustainable development and covering chemicals at all stages of their life-cycle, including in products. It does not cover products to the extent that the health and environmental

¹ Adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, South Africa, September 2002).

aspects of the safety of the chemical and products are regulated by a domestic food or pharmaceutical authority or arrangement. The Strategic Approach is not a legally-binding instrument. The Global Plan of Action contains activities that may be undertaken voluntarily by stakeholders, according to their applicability, in order to pursue the commitments and objectives expressed in the High-level Declaration and the Overarching Policy Strategy.

4. The Conference will be reconvened in 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2020 in order periodically to review progress in the implementation of the Strategic Approach, and will be served by a UNEP-based secretariat. Other institutional arrangements to support implementation and taking stock of progress on the Strategic Approach will include national focal points, national coordination (inter-ministerial processes are recommended), regional focal points, regional meetings (as appropriate), and, at the international level, a periodic review process. In addition, the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals¹ was requested to continue to perform a coordinating function for intergovernmental organization activities and work programmes. WHO currently acts as the administering organization for this Inter-Organization Programme. In addition, it was decided that future sessions of the Conference should be held back-to-back with meetings of the governing bodies of relevant intergovernmental organizations, where appropriate.²

5. The objective of the Quick Start Programme, which includes establishment of a Trust Fund, is to support activities to enable initial capacity-building and implementation in developing countries, least developed countries, small island developing States and countries with economies in transition. The Conference invited the representatives of the seven participating organizations of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals and UNDP, to form an implementation committee for projects financed by the Quick Start Programme Trust Fund and decided to establish the Quick Start Programme Executive Board, consisting of two government representatives from each of the United Nations regions and all the bilateral and multilateral donors and other contributors to the Programme.

The main outcomes for the health sector

6. The main outcomes of the negotiations on the Strategic Approach for the health sector, including WHO, relate to: inclusion of all the priorities expressed by the health sector (which were contained in the progress report on implementation of resolution WHA56.22 on the Strategic Approach noted by the Fifty-eighth World Health Assembly³ – see below); confirmation that the Strategic Approach is multisectoral; institutional arrangements that enable participation of the health sector; recognition of the important role of the health sector in implementation; confirmation of WHO's lead role on health matters in the secretariat of the Strategic Approach; and inclusion of WHO in the trust fund implementation committee. In relation to the secretariat, the Conference welcomed a potential offer from WHO of a professional staff member.

7. The priorities developed by the health sector and which are fully reflected in the Strategic Approach text are:

¹ The participating organizations are ILO, FAO, WHO, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, UNEP, UNIDO and OECD, with UNDP and the World Bank as observers.

² Overarching policy strategy, paragraph 25. Document UNEP/GCSS.IX/6/Add.1.

³ Document WHA58/2005/REC/3, summary record of the eleventh meeting of Committee A.

- actions to improve ability to access, interpret and apply scientific knowledge
- filling of gaps in scientific knowledge
- elaborating globally harmonized methods for chemical risk assessment
- devising better ways to determine impacts of chemicals on health, to set priorities for action and to monitor progress of the Strategic Approach
- building capabilities of countries to deal with poisonings and chemical incidents
- formulating strategies directed specifically at the health of children and workers
- promoting alternatives to highly toxic and persistent chemicals
- formulating strategies aimed at prevention of ill-health and disease caused by chemicals

Possible next steps for the health sector

8. The next steps fall into two main categories: health-focused implementation activities and institutional arrangements. The health sector, including WHO, has an established track-record of work in the high-level health-sector priority areas. The next step would involve focusing implementation efforts on those activities of the Strategic Approach of most relevance to the health sector at country, regional and international levels. The Conference encouraged the governing bodies of relevant intergovernmental organizations to endorse or otherwise appropriately acknowledge the Strategic Approach with a view to incorporating its objectives into their programmes of work within their mandates and to report thereon to the International Conference on Chemicals Management. For WHO, the Strategic Approach could be taken into account in future programmes of work. In addition, the priority activity of formulating strategies for the health of workers is also within the mandate of ILO, with which WHO has an established joint programme of cooperation.

9. Given that resolution WHA56.22 provided a mandate for the Director-General to facilitate health-sector input to the development of the Strategic Approach, a similar arrangement could be made for its implementation. In view of the Strategic Approach's institutional arrangements, the next steps for the health sector at country level would include engagement in the national and regional processes that are being established. There should be one national focal point for official contact with the secretariat of the Strategic Approach and some governments may wish to nominate such focal points from the health sector. In any case, a network of national health contacts would aid WHO in facilitating the implementation activities of the health sector, through its regional offices as appropriate.

10. The presence of WHO in the trust fund implementation committee will allow due weight to be given to health considerations in funding decisions

ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

11. The Health Assembly is invited to consider the following draft resolution:

The Fifty-ninth World Health Assembly,

Having considered the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management¹;

Recalling the request in resolution WHA56.22 on the participation of global health partners in the further development of the strategic approach to international chemicals management for the completed strategic approach to be submitted to the Health Assembly for consideration;

Recalling the first principle of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, namely, that “Human beings are at the centre of concerns for sustainable development. They are entitled to a healthy and productive life in harmony with nature”;²

Recalling paragraph 23 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation³ adopted by the World Summit on Sustainable Development on 4 September 2002, and paragraph 56 of the 2005 World Summit Outcome adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 16 December 2005,⁴ in which heads of State and Government resolved to promote such a strategic approach;

Welcoming the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, consisting of the Dubai Declaration on International Chemicals Management, the Overarching Policy Strategy and the Global Plan of Action, as adopted by the International Conference on Chemicals Management in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on 6 February 2006;

Noting the endorsement of the Strategic Approach by the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme at its 9th Special Session, in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, on 9 February 2006;

Welcoming the multisectoral nature of the Strategic Approach and the spirit of coordination and cooperation between the participating organizations of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, and the important role of UNEP in the development and implementation of the Strategic Approach;

Noting the active participation of the health sector, including WHO, in the development of the Strategic Approach, that comprises the priorities developed by the health sector, as noted by the Fifty-eighth World Health Assembly;⁵

¹ See Document Number A59/41.

² Document A/CONF.151/26 (Vol. I), Principle 1.

³ Report of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August - 4 September 2002 (United Nations publications, Sales no. E.03.II.A1) chap. I, resolution 2, annex.

⁴ Resolution 60/1.

⁵ Document WHA58/2005/REC/3, summary record of the eleventh meeting of Committee A.

Mindful of WHO's role in providing international leadership on the human-health aspects of the sound management of chemicals;

Mindful also of WHO's contribution to the sound management of chemicals through the International Programme on Chemical Safety, a cooperative venture between ILO, WHO and UNEP, and the established joint programme of cooperation between WHO and the ILO on workers' health;

Recognizing the need for health interests at country level to be addressed in the implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management,

1. ENDORSES the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management as contained in the Dubai Declaration on International Chemicals Management, the Overarching Policy Strategy and the Global Plan of Action;¹

2. URGES Member States:

(1) to take full account of the health aspects of chemical safety in national implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management;

(2) to participate in national, regional and international efforts to implement the Strategic Approach, including the International Conference on Chemicals Management;

(3) to nominate a national Strategic Approach focal point from the health sector, where appropriate, in order to maintain contact with WHO;

3. REQUESTS the Director-General:

(1) to facilitate implementation by the health-sector of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, focusing on human health-related elements, and to establish a network of national Strategic Approach focal points for this purpose;

(2) to provide support for implementation of the Strategic Approach by working with partners in the Inter-Organization Programme on the Sound Management of Chemicals and the International Programme on Chemical Safety, and with ILO on workers' health as related to in the Strategic Approach;

(3) to inform, on behalf of the Health Assembly, the International Conference on Chemicals Management of progress in implementing its resolution.²

¹ Document UNEP/GCSS.IX/6/Add.1.

² Resolution 1, paragraph 3, in document UNEP/GCSS.IX/6/Add.1, Annex III.

ANNEX I

[UNEDITED ADVANCE FINAL]**Dubai Declaration on International Chemicals Management¹**

We, the ministers, heads of delegation and representatives of civil society and the private sector, assembled at the International Conference on Chemicals Management in Dubai from 4 to 6 February 2006, declare the following:

The sound management of chemicals is essential if we are to achieve sustainable development, including the eradication of poverty and disease, the improvement of human health and the environment and the elevation and maintenance of the standard of living in countries at all levels of development;

Significant, but insufficient, progress has been made in international chemicals management through the implementation of chapter 19 of Agenda 21² and the International Labour Organization Conventions No. 170 on Safety in the Use of Chemicals at Work and No. 174 on the Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents, , the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, as well as in addressing particularly hazardous chemicals through the recent entry into force of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, and the adoption of the Globally Harmonized System for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals;

The private sector has made considerable efforts to promote chemical safety through voluntary programmes and initiatives, such as product stewardship and the chemical industry's Responsible Care programme;

Non-governmental public health and environmental organizations, trade unions and other civil society organizations have made important contributions to the promotion of chemical safety;

Progress in chemicals management has not, however, been sufficient globally and the environment worldwide continues to suffer from air, water and land contamination, impairing the health and welfare of millions;

The need to take concerted action is accentuated by a wide range of chemical safety concerns at the international level, including a lack of capacity for managing chemicals in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, dependency on pesticides in agriculture, exposure of workers to harmful chemicals and concern about the long-term effects of chemicals on both human health and the environment;

The global production, trade and use of chemicals are increasing, with growth patterns placing an increasing chemicals management burden on developing countries and countries with economies in transition, in particular the least developed among them and small island developing States, and presenting them with special difficulties in meeting this challenge. As a result, fundamental changes are needed in the way that societies manage chemicals;

We are determined to implement the applicable chemicals management agreements to which we are Party, strengthen the coherence and synergies that exist between them and work to address, as appropriate, existing gaps in the framework of international chemicals policy;

¹ Document UNEP/GCSS.IX.6/Add. 1, Annex I.

² *Report of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, Rio de Janeiro, 3–14 June 1992* (United Nations publication, Sales No. E.93.I.8 and corrigenda), vol. I: *Resolutions adopted by the Conference*, resolution 1, annex II.

We commit ourselves in a spirit of solidarity and partnership to achieving chemical safety and thereby assisting in fighting poverty, protecting vulnerable groups, and advancing public health and human security;

We commit ourselves to respecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, understanding and respecting ecosystem integrity and addressing the gap between the current reality and our ambition to elevate global efforts to achieve the sound management of chemicals;

We are unwavering in our commitment to promoting the sound management of chemicals and hazardous wastes throughout their life-cycle, in accordance with Agenda 21 and the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation,¹ in particular paragraph 23. We are convinced that the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management constitutes a significant contribution towards the internationally agreed development goals set out in the Millennium Declaration. It builds upon previous international initiatives on chemical safety and promotes the development of a multi- and cross-sectoral and participatory strategic approach. ;

We therefore adopt the Overarching Policy Strategy, which, together with the present declaration, constitutes our firm commitment to the Strategic Approach and its implementation;

We recommend the use and further development of the Global Plan of Action, to address current and ever-changing societal needs, as a working tool and guidance document for meeting the commitments to chemicals management expressed in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development,² Agenda 21, the Bahia Declaration on Chemical Safety,³ the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the 2005 World Summit Outcome⁴ and this Strategic Approach;

We are determined to realize the benefits of chemistry, including green chemistry, for improved standards of living, public health and protection of the environment, and are resolved to continue working together to promote the safe production and use of chemicals;

We are committed to strengthening the capacities of all concerned to achieve the sound management of chemicals and hazardous wastes at all levels;

We will continue to mobilize national and international financing from public and private sources for the life-cycle management of chemicals;

We will work towards closing the gaps and addressing the discrepancies in the capacity to achieve sustainable chemicals management between developed countries on the one hand and developing countries and countries with economies in transition on the other by addressing the special needs of the latter and strengthening their capacities for the sound management of chemicals and the development of safer alternative products and processes, including non-chemical alternatives, through partnerships, technical support and financial assistance;

We will work towards effective and efficient governance of chemicals management by means of transparency, public participation and accountability involving all sectors of society, in particular striving for the equal participation of women in chemicals management;

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