

UN/GHS-SC/4/INF.18

**Sub-Committee of Experts on the
Globally Harmonized System of Classification
and Labelling of Chemicals**

**(Fourth session, 9-11 December 2002,
Agenda item 5)**

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

Transmitted by UNITAR

1. At the last meeting of the SCEGHS in July 2002, UNITAR provided a verbal update of the activities in the UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme and proposal for a Global GHS Partnership. The purpose of this INF document is to provide a similar update in writing, as requested by a member of the SCEGHS at the July session.

UNITAR/ILO Capacity Building Programme Activities

2. The pilot countries continue their work on developing national chemical hazard communication and GHS implementation strategies. In Zambia, the four sectoral working groups convened under the national committee continue to prepare their recommendations for action. It is anticipated that Zambia will complete the planning phase and begin implementation of priority activities in March 2003. The observer from Zambia will provide you with more detail about these activities and future plans.
3. In South Africa, the MOA with UNITAR has recently been signed, so project activities – implemented through NEDLAC (National Economic Development and Labour Council) – will now commence. The first task will be to conduct an assessment (situation analysis) of the infrastructure and available national expertise relevant to chemical hazard communication in South Africa, to be completed early in 2003.
4. Regarding the related activities underway in Senegal and Sri Lanka, both countries will have completed national GHS action plans by January of 2003. Senegal is additionally planning a national workshop, with support of the ILO, in January 2003.
5. UNITAR/ILO appreciate the support of the Government of the Netherlands for these projects. UNITAR/ILO continue to seek additional resources to add further pilot countries to ensure regional and linguistic balance in the programme. Both Thailand and Argentina, for example, have indicated strong interest in being considered as possible candidates.

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

Related Activities

7. A sub-regional workshop on the GHS is being planned for SADC countries, co-sponsored by ECZ, GTZ and UNITAR, to be held in the spring of 2003 in Zambia. It is also anticipated that South Africa will play an active role in the workshop.
8. A side event entitled “The Globally Harmonized System for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals: Opportunities and Challenges” will be held on the evening of Sunday, 2 November 2003, at Forum IV. The workshop will provide participants with an opportunity to learn about the new system and discuss key issues regarding GHS implementation. Presentations and discussions will include the perspectives of governments, industry, labour and international organizations.

Global Partnership for Capacity Building to Implement the GHS

9. Regarding the UNITAR/ILO/OECD proposed *Global Partnership for Capacity Building to Implement the GHS* – announced at the last session – UNITAR is pleased to inform the SCEGHS that this Partnership was formally launched at a dedicated side-event at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), held in Johannesburg, South Africa, from 26 August to 4 September 2002. The Partnership is expected to promote the development and implementation of national GHS action plans as well as related training and capacity building activities, particularly in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. Importantly, the Partnership will build upon the work of international organisations, countries and others, in particular industry. It is intended to serve as an “umbrella” for all GHS-related capacity building activities. UNITAR/ILO/OECD would like to thank the Government of Switzerland for their financial contribution to the initial implementation and coordination of the Partnership. The core Partners are in the process of developing a framework for the implementation and further elaboration of the Partnership. It is hoped that a preliminary meeting of an advisory group for the Partnership will meet in 2003. The Partnership information sheet submitted to the WSSD Secretariat is attached.
10. UNITAR will continue to update the SCEGHS on all of these activities over the course of the next year.



INTER-ORGANIZATION PROGRAMME FOR THE SOUND MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS
A cooperative agreement among UNEP, ILO, FAO, WHO, UNIDO, UNITAR and OECD

**PROTECTING PEOPLE AND THE ENVIRONMENT:
THE GLOBAL PARTNERSHIP FOR CAPACITY BUILDING FOR
CHEMICAL CLASSIFICATION AND LABELLING**

PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVES INFORMATION SHEET

Name of the Partnership/Initiative

“Global Partnership for Capacity Building to Implement the Globally Harmonized System for Chemical Classification and Labelling (GHS)”

October 2002

Expected date of initiation:

Expected date of completion: December 2008

Partners Involved:

Partners include and are expected to be drawn from the following countries and organizations. Other potential partners will be identified as the Partnership further develops.¹

Governments: Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Japan, The Netherlands, Senegal, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Zambia and other governments of industrialized countries, developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Intergovernmental organizations and bodies: Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS), International Labour Organization (ILO), Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), World Health Organization (WHO), as well as other international and regional organisations, including secretariats of regional trade agreements such as the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and its “Chemical Dialogue”.

Major groups: International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA), International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers’ Unions (ICEM), University of Cape Town, University of Zambia, WWF International.

Other: Chemical Hazards Communication Society (CHCS), Industrial Ecology Institute (Kenya).

¹ Initial support for partnership activities and co-ordination has been provided by the Government of Switzerland and by the Government of the Netherlands through UNITAR executed country projects in South Africa, Sri Lanka, Senegal, and Zambia in which chemical hazard communication and the GHS was selected as a priority topic.

Leading Partner: UNITAR (with ILO and OECD) under the auspices of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), a collaborative agreement among UNEP, ILO, WHO, UNIDO, FAO, UNITAR and OECD.

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Main objectives of the Partnership:

Communicating the hazards of dangerous chemicals to workers and the public is a key foundation for protecting human health and the environment. As a major break-through in this area, the Globally Harmonized System for Chemical Classification and Labelling (GHS) is expected to be approved by the UN Economic and Social Council Subcommittee of Experts on the GHS (SCEGHS) in December 2002 and by ECOSOC in early 2003, following more than a decade of technical work and negotiations after the Rio Summit in 1992. The GHS has the ultimate goal of ensuring that information on chemical hazards (such as labels and safety data sheets) is made available to workers and consumers in a harmonized and comprehensible format in countries around the world.

Early feedback from developing countries has documented that widespread adoption of the GHS and effective chemical hazard communication is only likely to occur if adequate support, training and technical assistance is made available to countries in need of building appropriate GHS-relevant legal and technical infrastructures. Suitable training and education will be required to ensure the proper use of GHS tools in different national contexts. This will be of particular importance to the developing countries and countries with economies in transition that did not take a direct part in the technical work of harmonization.

The overall goal of the Partnership is to build capacities at all levels with the result that dangerous chemicals traded internationally and produced locally are appropriately classified and labeled in accordance with the GHS. To achieve this goal, the Partnership will catalyse inter-disciplinary and inter-sectoral co-operation between major stakeholders inside and outside the UN system, with a view to create synergies and to set up a global network for chemical hazard communication capacity building. The Partnership specifically seeks the broader involvement of concerned industries, the private sector, corporate associations and concerned non-governmental organizations in international efforts to implement the GHS.

Specific objectives and core activities of the Partnership include, *inter alia*:

- Support for multi-stakeholder processes in developing countries and countries with economies in transition to develop and implement National GHS and Chemical Hazard Communication Action Plans;
- Preparation of GHS-related situation analyses and capacity needs assessments both at the regional and national levels;

- Development of guidance and training materials on important aspects of GHS strategy development and implementation;
- Implementation of GHS awareness raising, training and capacity building activities at the regional and national levels, including development of train-the-trainer strategies; and
- Provision of feedback to the SCEGHS, the IOMC, and the IFCS on issues relevant to GHS capacity building.

Relationship of the Partnership with the objectives of Agenda 21 as well as relevant goals and objectives of the United Nation Millennium Declaration:

The Partnership is directly linked to an anticipated negotiated (Type 1) outcome of the WSSD. The Fourth Preparatory Committee for the WSSD held in Bali has developed the following agreed language addressing the GHS: [Action at all levels to....] encourage countries to implement the new globally harmonized system (GHS) for the classification and labeling of chemicals as soon as possible with a view to having the system fully operational by 2008.

The Partnership also relates directly to the implementation of Programme Area B of Chapter 19 of Agenda 21, “Harmonization of classification and labelling of chemicals” and in particular paragraph 19.31. Agenda 21 states that “Governments and institutions and non-governmental organizations, with the collaboration of appropriate organizations and programmes of the United Nations, should launch training courses and information campaigns to facilitate the understanding and use of a new harmonized classification and compatible labelling system for chemicals.”

Regarding the Millennium Declaration, the Partnership relates to the goal of supporting “the principles of sustainable development, including those set out in Agenda 21, agreed upon at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development.”

Expected results:

The main result of the Partnership will be the accelerated implementation of the GHS in all regions, with a higher degree of understanding of chemical hazard labels by users in key sectors such as consumers, transport, agriculture and industrial facilities. The overall long-term result of the Partnership would be a decrease in environmental and human health related effects attributable to the use of hazardous chemicals.

Indicators of success of Partnership activities and GHS implementation in the long term include, for example, the following:

- the presence in countries around the world of harmonized warning symbols and other hazard communication tools on chemicals and chemical mixtures in industrial production, chemicals and chemical mixtures in transport, agricultural chemicals and mixtures and consumer products containing hazardous chemicals;
- a higher degree of recognition of chemical labels (including pictograms and hazard statements) by the public and workers;

- a measurable decrease in the incidence of chemicals-related misuse, environmental spills and accidents and poisoning cases among the public and workers;
- increased use of less harmful alternative chemicals in the environment, the workplace and by consumers;
- effective participation of developing countries in relevant international fora including, *inter alia*, the UN SCEGHS and IFCS; and
- harmonized national legislation based on the GHS, in accordance with country needs.

Specific targets of the Partnership and timeframe for the achievement and execution of core activities:

1. GHS and hazard communication awareness raising materials prepared, peer-reviewed and widely disseminated by 2003.
2. Initial pilot projects on GHS Action Plan Development completed in four countries by 2004.
3. Regional and sub-regional GHS capacity needs assessments and GHS implementation scenarios prepared by 2004.
4. GHS guidance and training package prepared, pilot tested, and adapted by 2004/2005.
5. Two pilot projects for GHS Action Plan Development per UN region completed and evaluated by 2005.
6. Regional GHS Awareness Raising Workshops organized in all UN regions by 2005.
7. Regional partner organizations identified and train-the-trainer workshops completed by 2005.
8. National GHS Action Plan projects initiated in the greatest possible number of countries, subject to the availability of resources (2005 - 2008).

Coordination and Implementation Mechanism

Core partnership activities ("Type A" activities) will be organised through the UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme² in close collaboration with OECD and other partners. Partners would be expected to provide in-kind support, in particular in the form of expertise, logistic support, trainers and training facilities, travel support for developing countries, etc. In addition, activities executed directly by organisations or countries can be considered as Partnership activities ("Type B" activities), if they make a significant contribution to achieving the objectives and targets of the Partnership.

UNITAR will provide the Secretariat for the Partnership, working in close collaboration with IOMC. The Programme Advisory Group (PAG) for the UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building

² This programme is part of UNITAR's Training and Capacity Building Programmes in Chemicals and Waste Management; for further information, please see <www.unitar.org/cwm>.

Programme will serve as the basis for an Advisory Group to the Partnership. The PAG already brings together members from international organisations, countries, and non-governmental organisations. The Group also reviews GHS-related capacity building and training material, establishes linkages among existing chemical hazard communication initiatives, and provides overall guidance regarding the implementation of GHS pilot projects. The Advisory Group to the Partnership will be open to organisations and countries that provide support for Partnership activities, either directly or in-kind. It will also include representatives from countries that have initiated national GHS action plans.

In addition, UNITAR/ILO/OECD will establish a small Partnership Management Group (PMG) which is responsible for day-to-day decision making. The PMG will be comprised of UNITAR, ILO, OECD, supplemented by countries and organisations which provide financial contributions to the implementation of "Type A" activities.

Arrangements for funding

Initial "Type A" activities of the Partnership executed through the UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme have received financial support from the Government of Switzerland and from the Government of the Netherlands through UNITAR executed country projects in South Africa, Sri Lanka, Senegal, and Zambia who selected chemical hazard communication and the GHS as a priority topic. These commitments, together with significant in kind contributions and "Type B" activities of other partners altogether can be valued at about USD 500,000 for the period 2002/early 2003. It is envisaged that the Partnership will require funding additional to that already being provided, and discussions with several potential donors are ongoing. Immediately following WSSD, UNITAR/ILO together with OECD will formally approach potential donors which have in the past shown an interest to provide funding for chemical safety activities, as well as the private sector. Consideration will be given to establishing a Trust Fund to support activities to which governments, industry and others could contribute.

Arrangements for capacity building and technology transfer

Development of institutional and human resources capacities for GHS implementation and hazard communication is at the core of the Partnership. The great majority of country project activities are executed through local organizations and partners. Also, a train-the-trainer approach and South-South collaboration forms an integral part of Partnership projects. For example, in the area of comprehensibility testing, the University of Cape Town has been requested to train experts at the University of Zambia, which in turn will train experts in other African countries. In addition, technology and know-how regarding classifying chemicals and safety information available through the private sector in developed countries will be transferred to the private sector in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Links of Partnership with on-going sustainable development activities at the international and/or regional level (if any)

The Partnership will be coordinated and managed by UNITAR/ILO/OECD under the auspices of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC). It will also link with the Inter-Governmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) and the UN Subcommittee of Experts on the GHS (SCEGHS).

Monitoring Arrangements

The Partnership will be subject to continuous monitoring and review by the Management and Advisory Groups for the Partnerships. It will regularly report to, and obtain feedback from, the Inter-Organization Coordinating Committee (IOCC) of the IOMC, the UN SCEGHS and the IFCS. A website for the Partnership will be developed to promote the Partnership and as a tool to ensure transparency and co-ordination.

Other relevant information:

At the Summit, the Partnership will be introduced on the following two occasions:

1. Partnership Announcement, Friday 30 August, 4:00-4:30 p.m., Sandton Conference Center (please check daily bulletin for possible change of time).
2. Presentation by UNITAR's Executive Director at the parallel event "The Role of the Chemical Industry in Capacity Building in the Safe Management of Chemicals: Working Towards Stronger Partnerships", 30 August 2002, 12:30-15:30, Hilton Hotel. The event is sponsored by the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA).

Additional written material on the Partnership can be obtained at the UNITAR stand in the Ubuntu Village.

Web-sites: www.unitar.org/cwm; www.ilo.org/safework; www.oecd.org/ehs

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