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**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

Seventh session, 14-16 July 2004
Item 6 of the provisional agenda

COORDINATION AND WORK PROGRAMME

Report of the Correspondence Group on the Sub-Committee's Process

Transmitted by the Chairperson

Background

1. At the first session of the Sub-Committee, the following principles about the Sub-Committee process were established (ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2, paras. 42 and 43):

42. *The Sub-Committee recognized that sometimes it might be necessary to use the resources of other organizations to assist the Sub-Committee. On that basis, and taking into account the work going on in different organizations, the Sub-Committee:*

- (a) *Invited the IOMC CG/HCCS to submit as an official document for the December 2001 session of the Sub-Committee a draft of the GHS document;*
- (b) *Invited OECD to finalize the work on classification criteria for:*
 - *aspiration hazards;*
 - *respiratory irritation hazards;*
 - *water-activated toxics;*

and to submit corresponding proposals for the December 2002 session of the GHS Sub-Committee;

- (c) *Invited OECD to investigate the need to address narcotic effects for classification purposes;*
- (d) *Recognizing the specific expertise of OECD, ILO, TDG Sub-Committee, UNITAR and other organizations, invited these organizations (focal points) to be involved in the work on GHS.*

43. *The Committee agreed that:*
- (a) *Future work by the appropriate focal points will be based on proposals from the Sub-Committee, specifying scope of the work and timescale;*
 - (b) *Participants in the Sub-Committee that have not been involved in the work of the focal points should be invited to participate in the ongoing and future work of these focal points;*
 - (c) *Focal points should report to the Sub-Committee on the progress of the work at each meeting and submit their proposals to the Sub-Committee in accordance with the timescale envisaged by the Sub-Committee, with due respect to the existing rules for document submission.*

2. At the fourth session of the Sub-Committee (ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/8, page 5, para. 22):

"...The TDG Sub-Committee had acted as focal point for physical hazards during the development of the GHS, and had completed its work. Any new issue should now be brought first to the attention of the GHS Sub-Committee, who would refer it to the TDG Sub-Committee for resolution."

3. At the fifth session of the Sub-Committee (ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/10, page 6, para. 22):

"The expert from Italy requested some clarification about the process for the submission of proposals related to the GHS from the OECD Task Force and Joint Meeting to the Sub-Committee, in particular what the situation would be if the OECD Task Force and the Sub-Committee were not of the same opinion. It was confirmed that when differences would be of minor importance or within the competence of the Sub-Committee, the Sub-Committee would not necessarily need to come back to the OECD bodies for further consideration. However, in case of substantial differences of opinion, OECD would re-address the issue(s) by its Task Force on HCL and report back to the Sub-Committee on the outcome of these deliberations."

Issue:

4. At the sixth session of the Sub-Committee, the working relationship between the Sub-Committee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals and the technical focal points, i.e., OECD, ILO, TDG Sub-Committee, UNITAR and other organizations was raised. A Correspondence Group on the Sub-Committee's Process was established to further improve the collaboration between the GHS Sub-Committee and the technical focal points (ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/12, para. 66) and clarify what the work procedure should be with the focal points (ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/12, para. 26).

5. The Correspondence Group was composed of experts from Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the United States of America, the OECD Secretariat, the UNECE Secretariat and was led by the Chairperson of the Sub-Committee.

Discussion:

6. The Correspondence Group reaffirmed the agreement reached at the first session of the Sub-Committee (ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2, paras. 42-43). It was recognized that issues under 43(a) and (b) could be improved.

7. Concerning the future work of the GHS Sub-Committee (para. 43(a)): given that proposals may be submitted to the GHS Sub-Committee by Sub-Committee members themselves or by the technical focal points, the Sub-Committee may then decide:

- a. to work on a proposed issue within the GHS Sub-Committee structure; or
 - b. to assign the work to a technical focal point, i.e., OECD, ILO, TDG Sub-Committee, UNITAR and other organizations.
8. At its sixth session, the Sub-Committee agreed that:
- a. every document presented at the TDG Sub-Committee dealing with classification and labelling shall also be brought to the GHS Sub-Committee; and
 - b. every document presented to the GHS Sub-Committee, which can affect hazard classes relevant for the transport, shall be brought also to the attention of the TDG Sub-Committee (see ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/12, para. 25).
9. To improve transparency in the work assigned to the OECD, in early February 2004, the OECD Joint Meeting reached the following decisions:
- a. to invite all GHS Sub-Committee and TDG Sub-Committee members to the meetings of the OECD Task Force on Harmonization, Classification and Labelling (TF HCL);
 - b. to put all draft proposals on the OECD protected website and give access to them through a password to both GHS Sub-Committee and TDG Sub-Committee members;
 - c. to circulate to the GHS Sub-Committee and TDG Sub-Committee members, in parallel to the OECD TF HCL members, all draft documents submitted to TF HCL for comments.
10. Since the February 2004 OECD Joint meeting, all OECD documents related to GHS classification and labelling are circulated to all members and participants in both UN Sub-Committees for comment. Comments on proposals should be sent directly to the OECD secretariat.
11. As a first case in the implementation of this new procedure, in mid-February 2004, the OECD circulated proposals for amendments of chapter 3.1 of the GHS to the UNECE secretariat for circulation to the Sub-Committees, together with a letter of the OECD informing of the decisions made and calling for comments on the proposed draft by a certain deadline. Such a procedure would allow the OECD secretariat to take into account the comments of the Sub-Committees' members at an early stage and may facilitate the adoption of related proposals during the two Sub-Committees sessions.
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