

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

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Item 4(b) of the provisional agenda

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE GHS

Cooperation with international organizations

Cooperation between the Open-ended Working Group of the Basel Convention and the United Nations Sub-Committee of Experts on the GHS

Note by the Secretariat of the Basel Convention

Background

1. In its decision VI/29 (International cooperation), the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention at its sixth meeting in December 2002, recognized the need for the Secretariat to continue participating in the work of the United Nations Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals.
2. Based on a request by the United Nations Subcommittee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals at its fourth session, in December 2002, the Secretariat of the Basel Convention gave a presentation to the Subcommittee at its fifth session, in July 2003, on the progress of work on hazard characteristics under the Basel Convention. The Subcommittee agreed to the formation of a correspondence group consisting of experts from Finland, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The correspondence group was entrusted with providing comments on the currently revised definitions and criteria for waste hazard characteristics under the Basel Convention with a view to harmonizing them with the Globally Harmonized System. At the Subcommittee's sixth session, in December 2003, the correspondence group presented the results of its work. The Subcommittee decided to send a letter to the Executive Secretary of the Basel Convention indicating its wish to develop further cooperation and to work together with the Open-ended Working Group on the harmonization of the classification criteria of the Basel Convention with relevance to the Globally Harmonized System.
3. At its seventh meeting in December 2004, the Conference of the Parties adopted decision VII/17 on the work on hazard characteristics, in which, among other things, it requested the Open-ended Working Group of the Basel Convention to establish a working relationship with the United Nations Subcommittee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of

Classification and Labelling of Chemicals with a view to exploring possible links between the work undertaken in the context of the Basel Convention on hazard characteristics and the elements of the globally harmonized system of classification and labelling of chemicals, including considerations of their respective work programmes to identify inconsistencies, discrepancies or shortcomings with a view to proposing appropriate actions. It also requested the Secretariat to present to the Open-ended Working Group, at its fourth session in July 2005, possible options for establishing a working relationship with the Subcommittee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals.

4. The Secretariat attended the eighth session of the Subcommittee in December 2004 and reported to it on progress in the work on hazard characteristics under the Basel Convention and informed it of the mandate given by the Conference of the Parties to the Open-ended Working Group to establish a working relationship with the Subcommittee with a view to exploring possible links between the work undertaken in the context of the Basel Convention on hazard characteristics and the elements of the globally harmonized system of classification and labelling of chemicals, including consideration of their respective work programmes to identify inconsistencies, discrepancies or shortcomings with a view to proposing appropriate action. The chair of the Subcommittee indicated that this issue would be included in the work programme of the Subcommittee for the following biennium and that a correspondence group would be set up for cooperation with the Basel Convention.

5. Pursuant to paragraph 5 of decision VII/17 of the Conference of the Parties, on work on hazard characteristics, at its fourth meeting, in July 2005, the Open-ended Working Group agreed to the establishment of a working relationship between itself and the United Nations Subcommittee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals and adopted the terms of reference of the correspondence group (see annex). Following a similar agreement on the establishment and terms of reference of the correspondence group by the Subcommittee of Experts in its meeting in July 2005, the Joint Correspondence Group was established and commenced its work. The members of the Joint Correspondence Group are listed on the Basel Convention website under <http://www.basel.int/techmatters/>.

6. At its fifth meeting in April 2006, the Open-ended Working Group agreed to ask the Conference of the Parties at its eight meeting scheduled to take place from 27 November to 1 December 2006 to adopt a decision along the following lines:

“The Conference of the Parties

1. *Agrees* to extend the mandate of the Joint Correspondence Group between the Open-ended Working Group and the United Nations Subcommittee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals and requests the Secretariat to communicate its decision to the United Nations Subcommittee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals;

2. *Also requests* the Secretariat to report regularly on the outcome of the work of the Joint Correspondence Group to the Open-ended Working Group and the Conference of the Parties.”

Present Status

7. After the nomination period for the Correspondence Group was over in August 2005, the Secretariat of the Basel Convention alerted the nominated members of the Group of its Terms of Reference and the drafts hazard characteristics studies under the Basel Convention which could be the subject of the Group's deliberation. However, to date little progress has been made by the Group in developing its work programme and fulfilling the approved Terms of Reference.

Annex

Terms of reference of the correspondence group between the United Nations Subcommittee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals and the Open-ended Working Group of the Basel Convention on hazard characteristics

1. The tasks of the correspondence group on hazard characteristics between the United Nations Subcommittee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals and the Open-ended Working Group of the Basel Convention are as follows:

(a) To work intersessionally, preferably by electronic means, with a view to undertaking consultations, between experts of the United Nations Subcommittee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System on Classification and Labelling of Chemicals and experts of the Open-ended Working Group, on the preparation of guidelines on hazard characteristic and on the revision of such guidelines adopted by the Conference of the Parties;

(b) To identify inconsistencies, discrepancies or shortcomings of hazard classification used or developed internationally with a view to recommending appropriate action to the Conference of the Parties;

(c) To work towards harmonization of hazard classification systems internationally in order to assist Parties in the implementation of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal and to improve consistency at the international level on the use of classification systems for wastes and chemicals;

(d) To prepare a work programme;

(e) To make regular reports on progress in its work to the United Nations Subcommittee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals and the Open-ended Working Group;

2. The correspondence group may invite experts to participate in the correspondence group if needed on the basis of the hazard characteristics being considered.
