

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 3 (d) of the provisional agenda

Implementation of the GHS: Miscellaneous

Information on activities to support the implementation of GHS

Transmitted by the expert from Sweden

Background

1. In the foreword to the GHS Purple Book pt. 6 it states that: *The GHS Sub-Committee is responsible for maintaining the GHS, promoting its implementation and providing additional guidance as needs arise while maintaining stability in the system to encourage its adoption.*
2. In addition to the work of the Sub-Committee on regular revisions and updates to reflect national, regional and international experiences e.g. amendments of different annexes, inclusion of new hazard classes etc, the promotion of further implementation of the system globally is an important task.
3. The Sub-Committee is taking stock of the status of implementation globally and we know that it is progressing in a slow manner. Countries and regions are reporting their updated status to the Sub-Committee. An analysis of this information and experiences from the process for implementation could be of interest to discuss and to reflect on in the meetings. Sharing of information on support given to countries working with implementation issues could also be included in these discussions.
4. With this informal paper, the Swedish expert would like to inform the Sub-Committee about some activities that are being conducted by the Swedish Chemicals Agency in the area of implementation of GHS. The Swedish expert would also welcome a discussion on what the Sub-Committee can do to share experiences in this area and to increase the implementation of GHS worldwide.
5. The Swedish Chemicals Agency has conducted a number of activities with the aim of both analysing barriers and challenges for countries wishing to implement GHS nationally, and promoting the implementation of GHS globally.
6. At the Sub-Committee meeting in July, a brief presentation was given on the outcome of two consultancy studies, one focusing on the role of international trade agreements for the implementation of GHS¹ and the other on the role of national substance classification lists in the implementation of GHS².

¹ [Study on the role of international trade agreements for the implementation of GHS \(Sweden\) | UNECE](#)

² The role of national substance classification lists in the implementation of GHS. (unpublished, accessible from The Swedish Chemicals Agency upon request)

7. The Swedish Chemicals Agency has GHS as a component in virtually all development cooperation projects. We stress the importance of GHS in chemicals management and offer support in implementation. We have produced a series of guidance documents³ in which GHS is given a central part for a preventive chemicals control. GHS also is a key issue in training programs⁴ that we give on a regular basis (normally twice a year). Some examples of the Swedish Chemicals Agency's collaborations and activities in this area are given below.

GHS implementation related activities and projects conducted by the Swedish Chemicals Agency

Africa

8. The Swedish Chemicals Agency has had a bilateral collaboration with the Department of Employment and Labour in South Africa since 2012, mainly focusing on issues related to GHS implementation. In 2021 the South African Department of Employment and Labour promulgated into law the Regulations for Hazardous Chemical Agents under the Occupational Health and Safety Act. These regulations make GHS classification, SDS and labelling compulsory for hazardous chemicals in the work environment.

9. Linked to the promulgation of the new regulations, training of government officials from various departments has been conducted with support from the Swedish Chemicals Agency during the year, this will continue in 2022.

10. The Swedish Chemicals Agency is also including some smaller capacity building activities related to GHS implementation in the bilateral cooperation with Zambia, Tanzania and Uganda.

11. The Swedish Chemicals Agency, in collaboration with UNITAR, conducted a virtual workshop "Understanding, implementing, and enforcing the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS)" in September 2021.

12. The aim was to provide senior governmental officials with an opportunity to learn and share experiences related to the process of implementing and making GHS operational, and to discuss the opportunities and challenges facing national competent authorities. The workshop also offered a possibility for the invited countries to identify ways of future national and regional collaboration. The target group for the workshop was senior governmental officials from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and South Africa. The countries nominated approximately six participants each, mostly from different organizations with a responsibility for the implementation of GHS. The requirement was that the participants had an overall knowledge of GHS and a mandate to influence the development of a legislation, standard or other instrument to implement GHS and to make it operational.

13. The presentations and discussions focused on implementation of GHS in national legislation, development of an implementation roadmap, and enforcement and practical implementation issues. Each country was also asked to present their implementation status and possible challenges and to define objectives and some activities that would contribute to the implementation. A follow up workshop is envisaged in the first half of 2022.

14. The Swedish Chemicals Agency is funding a project (2020-2023) run by the University of Cape Town (UCT): "Capacity Building to Promote Pesticide and

³ <https://www.kemi.se/en/international-cooperation/support-for-development-of-national-chemicals-control/web-guide---reducing-the-risks-from-chemicals>

⁴ <https://www.kemi.se/en/international-cooperation/support-for-development-of-national-chemicals-control/international-training-and-workshops>

Chemical Risk Management, Risk Reduction, and Institutional and Regional Cooperation in LMIC”.

15. One component of the project is the Chemical Network. This is a network that has been launched to improve capacity building in sound chemicals management globally, but with a particular focus on LMICs.

16. The network has a global audience and is open to all stakeholders. There are currently around 160 members from the African, North American, European, Asia-Pacific, Latin American and Caribbean regions. The members are from a number of sectors including academia, government, NGOs, intergovernmental organizations and the private sector. The highest membership is found in the African region and mostly from government and NGOs.

17. UCT hosts a number of online discussions with topics relevant to chemicals management with invitations sent out to the members of the network. The discussions are hosted on Zoom, as a means of allowing global participation, and are lead by invited presenters.

18. The discussions consist of three parts where each part begins with a brief 5-minute introduction of the topic followed by a question to be discussed for approx. 20-25 minutes in the chat.

19. During 2020-2021 four of the discussions in the Chemical discussion forum have focused on the implementation of GHS (*GHS Mapping Session, African government experiences with GHS implementation, GHS: advocacy case studies and lessons learnt, The role of industry in enhancing GHS implementation*).

ASEAN

20. The Swedish Chemicals Agency has an Agreement with the ASEAN (The Association of Southeast Asian Nations) secretariat, “Support for implementation of GHS and related chemical management issues within ASEAN”. The project will support the ASEAN member states to implement GHS in national legislation. The project will also support enhanced access and use of available information on systems for chemicals management in the different ASEAN member states.

21. Key activities are regional workshops on various aspects of GHS, technical support to individual countries in their process to develop national legislation to implement GHS, development of guidance documents/tools to support national implementation, discussions on the possibility to develop national/regional lists of classifications etc. The project has been postponed due to COVID-19 but will hopefully start in the beginning of next year.

Discussion

22. The expert from Sweden would like to invite the Sub-Committee to consider the following:

- (a) How can the Sub-Committee of Experts further increase its efforts to contribute to an increased implementation of GHS globally?
- (b) How can the Sub-Committee of Experts take a more active role in analysing the information received from surveys, questionnaires and reporting from countries on the implementation of GHS? Perhaps also on a regular basis, to make it possible to follow the development.
- (c) Would it be possible to give a summary of the discussions from the Program Advisory Group (PAG) in the Sub-Committee meetings?
- (d) Would it be possible to include a point to the agenda where experience from different types of activities with the aim to promote the implementation of GHS can be shared and discussed?