GLOBALLY HARMONIZED SYSTEM OF CLASSIFICATION AND LABELLING OF CHEMICALS

The Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) has been developed through cooperation between the International Labour Organization (ILO), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations on the basis of a mandate given in Agenda 21 by the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro.

The GHS addresses classification of chemicals by types of hazard and proposes harmonized hazard communication elements, including labels and safety data sheets. It aims at ensuring that information on the physical hazards and toxicity of chemicals is available in order to enhance the protection of human health and the environment during the handling, transport and use of these chemicals. The GHS also provides a basis for harmonization of rules and regulations on chemicals at national, regional and worldwide levels, which is also an important factor for trade facilitation.

While Governments, regional institutions and international organizations are the primary audiences for the GHS, it also contains sufficient context and guidance for those in industry who will ultimately be implementing the requirements which have been adopted.

Adopted in December 2002 by the Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals, the GHS is regularly updated, revised and improved as experience is gained in its implementation. The Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD), adopted in Johannesburg in 2002, encourages countries to implement the GHS as soon as possible.

This ninth revised edition of the GHS contains various new or revised provisions including, the revision of chapter 2.1 (explosives) to better address their explosion hazard when they are not in their transport configuration; the revision of decision logics in parts 2, 3 and 4, and the classification and labelling summary tables in Annex 1; the revision and further rationalization of precautionary statements in Annex 3 and the updating of references to OECD test guidelines for the testing of chemicals in annexes 9 and 10.