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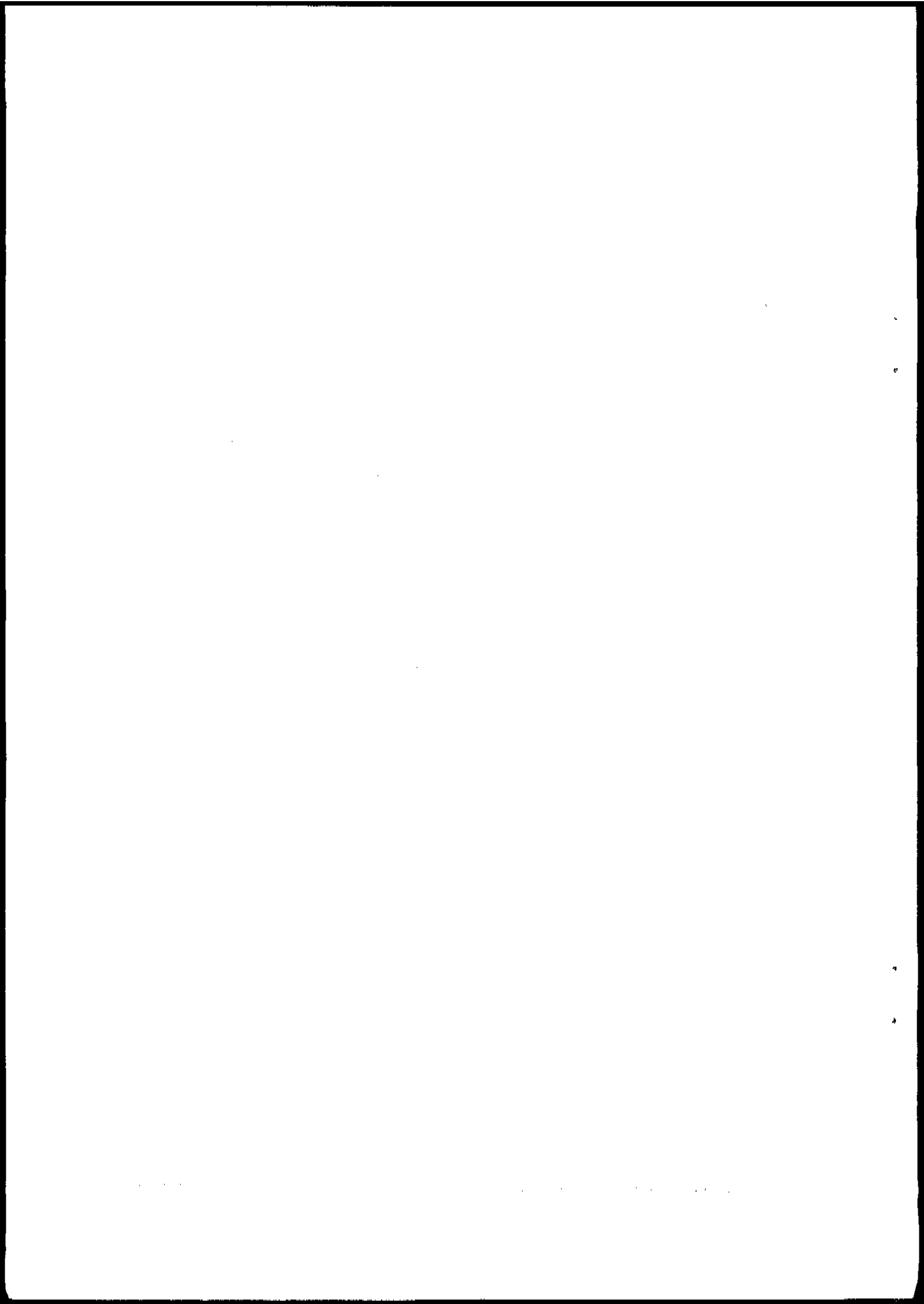
**IFCS**

**Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety**

**First Meeting of the Intersessional Group of the  
Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety**

**Bruges, Belgium**  
**20-23 March, 1995**

**FINAL REPORT**



# REPORT OF FIRST MEETING OF THE INTERSESSIONAL GROUP OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL FORUM ON CHEMICAL SAFETY

## INTRODUCTION

1. The first meeting of the Intersessional Group (ISG) of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) was held 20-23 March 1995 at the Governor's Palace, Bruges, Belgium, hosted by the Belgian Ministry of Public Health and Environment. Twenty-seven members of the ISG participated in the meeting. Representatives from 12 other countries, the Commission of the European Union (EC), 11 intergovernmental and 21 non-governmental organizations also took part in the meeting. Apologies for absence were received from India, Nigeria, the Russian Federation, Spain and Tonga. A list of participants is given in Annex 1. Dr K. Niblaeus (Sweden) presided as President with Mr Wang Yangzu (China), Professor G. Kanoute (Mali), and Dr G. Olaiz (Mexico) serving as Vice-Presidents. In the absence of the Russian Federation, Dr M. Cirk and Dr V. Bizek of the Czech Republic acted in the capacity of Rapporteur.

2. The meeting was opened by Dr O. Vanneste, the Governor of the Province of West Flanders. Dr G. Thiers welcomed participants to Belgium on behalf of Mr J. Santkin, the Minister of Public Health and Environment. Mrs E. Barsk-Rundquist read a statement from Mr N. Desai, Under-Secretary-General for the United Nations Department for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development.

3. The President of the Forum reminded the meeting that implementation of United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) Agenda 21 Chapter 19 was primarily a responsibility of Governments and that the IFCS had been established to support Governments in fulfilling their obligations. Coordination of international activities in support of implementing Chapter 19 was being promoted through a new Interorganization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) with its own Interorganization Coordinating Committee (IOCC). The IOMC provides a direct channel to the UN agencies not diluted by transmission through the Executive Bodies with their competing priorities. While the roles of the IFCS and IOCC were different, they work together for achieving common goals in relation to the sound management of chemicals.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY - ISG AGREED ACTION ITEMS AND ISSUES

Of the matters considered by the Intersessional Group of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (ISG) at its first meeting of, the following actions were agreed on:

### General

- The Executive Secretary to the Forum is to prepare a detailed financial statement outlining the status of the budget and resource requirements to each future session of the ISG and Forum as a standing agenda item.
- The ISG expresses, to the UNEP Governing Council and the U.N. Commission on Sustainable Development, its concern over the proposed cut in the UNEP budget for chemicals management by more than 50%. This reduction would seriously undermine UNEP's ability to fulfill its responsibilities under the Agenda 21, Chapter 19. The ISG:
  - urges ISG representatives to convey these concerns directly to their country's representatives to the May 1995 UNEP Governing Council meeting; and
  - requests the President of the IFCS to convey these concerns directly to the UNEP Executive Director immediately following this ISG meeting.
- An inventory of programmes, activities and projects related to chemical safety being carried out by international organizations was recommended to be compiled by ISG 2.
- An inventory of bilaterally supported initiatives in chemicals management should be developed by countries.
- Recognizing that the difficulties of establishing networking arrangements amongst countries for the work of the Forum in some regions are considerable, the ISG recommended that the IOMC develop a proposal on how this situation might be improved for presentation at ISG 2.

### Programme Area A

- To maintain an ongoing overview of progress in the achievement of the targets for priority chemical assessments, the ISG recommended that a report be available to each future session of the ISG and Forum.
- A report on the development and implementation of the IPCS pilot project for internationalization of national assessment documents and information on criteria for selecting chemicals for priority assessment was recommended for presentation to the ISG 2.
- A working paper, prepared in cooperation with industry, on the issue of data confidentiality with respect to facilitating the development of international chemical risk assessments was recommended for ISG 2.
- The IRPTC/ECETOC Inventory of Critical Reviews of Chemicals should be completed expeditiously and include more information on national pesticide documents. A report on progress to the ISG 2 by the responsible agencies was recommended.
- The ISG recommended that international organizations producing assessments review their documents with a view towards accommodating the special needs of developing countries and assisting decision-making (e.g. concise assessment documents, practical information concerning chemical hazards), and report to the next ISG on proposed changes

### Programme Area B

- With respect to the work on harmonization of classification and labelling of chemicals:
  - the Coordinating Group for the Harmonization of Chemical Classification Systems (CG/HCCS) is requested to strengthen its membership, particularly from the developing countries.
  - the CG/HCCS is requested to promote an increase in the awareness among national authorities on their work, in particular on its scope and progress. Such an initiative would serve to avoid duplication of effort.
  - the CG/HCCS is requested to report back to the ISG 2 with a detailed report on technical work and its progress.
  - the CG/HCCS is requested to develop guidance on the underlying principles followed. Such guidance should be sensitive to developing countries needs for information on the process.
  - the CG/HCCS is requested to consider mechanisms for implementation and

report to the ISG 2 on how progress could best be made on these political issues, particularly non-consensus matters.

- all governments are urged to undertake a coordinated approach in formulating national positions on harmonization.

#### Programme Area C

- A review of information delivery, including an inventory of networking arrangements and recommendations for priority activities to meet the needs of countries, was recommended by the ISG. It was proposed that the UNEP/IRPTC take the lead in coordinating the preparation of a report for the next meeting of the ISG.
- In response to the requests for access to and exchange of information on chemical safety, the ISG recommended that a seminar/workshop be held in conjunction with the ISG 2. The seminar/workshop would display and introduce available literature and electronic information.

#### Programme Area D

- The results of the UNITAR pilot studies on the establishment of Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs) in Mexico, Egypt and the Czech Republic were recommended by the ISG to be shared with other countries.
- Countries were requested to share their experience in reduction in the use of pesticides.
- The ISG invites the OECD in cooperation with FAO to report to ISG 2 on the outcomes of their joint pesticide risk reduction workshop
- As a result of the development of criteria to determine if a chemical was suitable as a persistent organic pollutant (POP) candidate, African countries and others recommended that a list of POPs be prepared with a summary of their uses and means of disposal. It was noted that the criteria were being developed through the U.N. Economic Commission for Europe Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP) with further progress being carried forward by a Philippines/Canada co-sponsored workshop in June 1995.
- The ISG endorsed the proposal of the USA, Mauritius and Slovakia recommending that Canada and the Philippines hold a meeting, immediately following their June 1995 technical experts meeting on POPs in Vancouver, to explore the feasibility of coordinating and channeling possible global actions on POPs. This meeting, in addition to government experts, should include relevant international bodies. It was recommended that definition of a process to examine the linkages between groups addressing POPs in Agenda 21 Chapters 17 and 19 be included in the agenda.

- Governments were urged to make use of the ILO Code of Practice in Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents, the UNEP/APELL programme and the various guidelines of OECD, IPCS, UNEP and WHO as mechanisms for implementing chemical accident preparedness and response.

#### Programme Area E

- It was proposed that countries complete their national profiles to indicate current capabilities and capacities for management of chemicals by ISG 2 and international and bilateral assistance was encouraged to facilitate this task.
- The need was reemphasized for all countries to establish their own mechanisms for coordination among relevant ministries and other institutions dealing with sound management of chemicals as well as the need for comprehensive national chemical safety policies and legislation.

Additional items noted by the ISG were:

#### General

- The proposal for a World Chemical Safety Day will be considered at ISG 2.
- Developed countries should be asked to prepare and circulate papers in advance of the next ISG meeting describing activities undertaken in response to Chapter 19 of Agenda 21 that relate directly to developing country needs.

#### Programme Area A

- Some countries endorsed the OECD Screening Information Data Sets (SIDS) programme for identifying hazardous chemicals, but noted that the establishment of a strong coordination mechanism was necessary to avoid duplication of effort with IPCS.

#### Programme Area C

- Concerning the ongoing work of UNEP and FAO on the implementation of the Prior Informed Consent Procedure (PIC), the ISG supported development of a legally-binding mechanisms with the provisos that;
  - full account was taken of experience in applying the current voluntary system;
  - the arrangement was restricted to the current scope of the voluntary PIC procedure;

- criteria for including chemicals in the PIC procedure be further evaluated;
  - countries not yet having done so designated their national authorities for PIC;
  - importing countries establish mechanisms to restrict, when they deem appropriate, the importation and manufacture for domestic use of PIC-designated chemicals;
  - a legally-binding approach may include voluntary arrangements for domestic implementation;
  - training in implementation of these mechanisms be established.
- Note was taken of the pilot activity in the Asian region on the establishment of a Global Information Network on Chemicals (GINC). Countries supported the undertaking of work to establish a GINC in all regions.

#### Programme Area D

- Several countries requested regional workshops to introduce the IPCS/INTOX poisons information project and promote the establishment of poison control facilities in countries.
- The work to promote the development and use of clean technologies regarding the production and use of chemicals, particularly the plans to create clean technology centres in Latin American countries, was noted. It was recognized that this work was also needed in other countries.

A number of other items identified by the regional groups can be found in the working group reports in Annex 3.

## MEETING SUMMARY

### Agenda Item 2

4. The proposed provisional agenda ISG/95.1(Rev.2) was adopted without amendment. Note was taken of the working, background, information and room documents for the meeting.

### Agenda Item 3

5. The IFCS Executive Secretary, Dr M. Mercier, presented an overview of the Forum activities and related international coordination since the establishment of the Forum in April 1994 (see ISG/95.2 Rev.1). He detailed the arrangements for the interim Forum Secretariat and trust fund and summarized the financial situation including contributions received in cash and in kind. He outlined meetings held, including the informal consultation with NGOs representing a wide range of industrial associations, environmental and consumer interest groups. The NGO sector had come forward with offers to provide background papers for the ISG. It was agreed that annual consultations would be held, with the next scheduled consultation in 1995, for which more extensive representation of NGOs would be sought. It was reported that a similar consultation planned with international scientific societies had regrettably needed to be postponed until after the first ISG meeting.

6. Note was taken that the second meeting of the Forum would need to be held early in 1997 so as to report to the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on follow-up to UNCED to be held in 1997. Timing and host for the second session of the Forum were needed. The second meeting of the ISG (ISG 2) was agreed to be hosted by Australia in Canberra in the first week of March 1996.

7. Attention was called to the need for establishing the funding of the Forum, including the support needed for the work of the Secretariat, on a long-term stable basis. In the discussion, it was recognized that the present *ad hoc* financial arrangements for the IFCS Secretariat were not satisfactory even as an interim arrangement. It was considered essential, as a standing item for future ISG and Forum meetings, to have a detailed budget outlining resources, priorities and requirements in order to promote the generation of the voluntary donor resources needed to implement workplans arising from agreed actions of the Forum and ISG. Such a budget was provided to the ISG and discussed under agenda item 11 (Annex 2).

8. The meeting had an initial review of issues relating to implementation of the six programme areas of Agenda 21 Chapter 19. Each programme area was introduced by Dr R. Lönngren, Special Advisor to IFCS, who summarized the substantive issues and provided foci against which the ISG could consider the issues. Under agenda item 10, four regional group meetings (Africa, Asia and Pacific, Eastern Europe and Latin America) were held to exchange experiences on specific problems, establishing regional networks, developing national profiles and specific work related to meeting the targets and priorities identified by the Forum. The reports of these meetings are presented in Annex 3 and key outcomes of the discussions are incorporated in the main body of the text. Heads of Delegations of the ISG member countries held a special session to review the work of the meeting and discuss future

work, particularly in relation to ISG 2; the main conclusions of which have also been integrated into the body of the record of the meeting.

9. In view of the work load of the first ISG meeting, an *ad hoc* "think tank" meeting of ISG member governments to consider cross-sectoral issues and established under the chairmanship of Australia. The report of the "think-tank" is given in Annex 4. Participating countries recognized that, whilst not all were able to participate, the report of the "think tank" covered important matters of substance and procedure, some of which were of particular importance to developing countries. These needed to be taken into account both by the regions in their working groups and the ISG.

#### **Agenda Item 4 - Programme Area A**

10. In relation to Programme Area A (ISG/95.3) discussion was directed towards four subjects: (i) international approaches to chemicals assessment, including priority setting of candidate assessments; (ii) establishment of an inventory of performed, ongoing or planned assessments; (iii) reduction in the use of vertebrate animals in toxicity testing and (iv) mutual acceptance of data.

11. Note was taken of the report of the Joint IPCS/OECD Consultation on Priority Chemicals and Related Matters (January 1995) which recognized that while extensive work would be required, the targets endorsed in Stockholm for assessments, although challenging, were realistic. The targets could be met by adopting a step-wise approach with well-established criteria for priority setting, this was based on the principle that quality should always have priority over quantity of outputs. The ISG agreed to maintain an ongoing overview of progress through a Secretariat report to each session of the ISG and Forum.

12. The ISG agreed that there was an ongoing need for international peer review of assessments if international acceptance was to be achieved. As a minimum this would require comprehensive and critical reviews based on agreed criteria and transparency of process. In particular, the role of the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS) and its technical programme as a centre of excellence was recognized as a critical element in international assessment, especially for chemicals for which there was heightened concern or for which assessment might be controversial. Some countries endorsed the OECD Screening Information Data Set (SIDS) programme for identifying hazardous chemicals, but noted that the establishment of a strong coordination mechanism was necessary to avoid duplication of effort with IPCS. The OECD SIAR's (SIDS Initial Assessment Reviews) produced in the OECD Existing Chemicals Programme now joined with the EU Existing Substances Programme were also recognized by the Joint Consultation as international documents contributing to meeting the targets set by the Forum at its first meeting.

13. A number of participants re-emphasized the need for developing countries and countries with economies in transition to make management decisions based on consensus reviewed scientific information. A better understanding of the requirements of developing countries and countries with economies in transition was needed in order for international assessment documents to be made more useful in guiding risk management decisions. In establishing priorities for international risk assessment account needs to be taken of chemicals of concern to developing countries. Attention was drawn to the need for identifying which

risk assessment methods are appropriate for use in various geographical locations of the world.

14. The Joint Consultation concluded that some national assessments can serve as a basis for preparing short international assessment documents; this would accelerate progress toward achieving the targets of Programme Area A and conserve limited resources. In order to use national assessments as a basis for international guidance, the criteria for quality and format recommended by the Joint Consultation needed to be respected. A number of countries reiterated the need for international peer review against the developed criteria for quality and format. With minor amendment and subject to consideration of supplemental information, the ISG took note, and a majority of countries accepted, the report of the Joint Consultation on Priority Chemicals and Related Matters referred to in paragraph 11 above.

15. A number of countries offered to take part in a pilot project to develop and implement a system for the preparation of national reviews of chemicals as the basis for developing international risk assessment documents. Emphasis was given to the need for high quality documents and comprehensive coverage of the appropriate literature. Note was taken that an IPCS meeting to initiate the pilot project would be held in Washington, 30 May - 1 June 1995. Several countries requested that a report on the development and implementation of the pilot project be made at the ISG 2. The report should include detailed information on the agreed criteria for ensuring quality and the process established. Additionally, criteria for selecting priority chemicals for assessment should be presented for discussion. Note was taken of the importance of natural toxins to developing countries and that those substances needed to be included in identifying priorities for chemical risk assessment. Issues related to confidentiality of data were acknowledged and the IOMC was requested to prepare, in cooperation with industry, a working paper on this subject for ISG-2.

16. A number of countries strongly emphasized the need to expeditiously complete the Inventory of Critical Reviews of Chemicals being undertaken by IRPTC and ECETOC. The inventory should also include more information on national pesticide documents. The ISG recommended that governments further support the work to establish the inventory. Some countries supported the development of the International Register of Risk Assessment Documents and Databases as proposed at the Joint Consultation referred to above.

17. The need for and importance of agreed harmonized multilingual definitions of concepts and terms used in the field of chemicals risk assessment and management for national implementation of international guidance was highlighted.

18. Some countries expressed concern about the need to better coordinate international efforts on the sound management of chemicals, and to avoid duplication, especially with respect to international action on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) as proposed in the Draft Programme Action on Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-Based Activities (see para 42).

19. The need for work in the areas of hormone mimics, impurities in chemical products and chemical interactions was noted by several NGOs. An environmental NGO proposed the establishment of an *ad hoc* working group to address appropriate testing protocols and policy approaches for endocrine-disrupting chemicals. It was noted also that work should

be undertaken to address the problems arising from the use of chemicals other than those uses for which they were introduced into the market place.

20. There was general support for approaches to reducing the use of vertebrate animals in testing of chemicals within the limits of current methodology. Such reductions should proceed in a step-wise manner as *in vivo* methods were agreed on and new *in vitro* testing methods were validated and proved effective. Attention was drawn to the potential of further developing approaches using structure-activity relationships.

21. The ISG welcomed the mechanism established by OECD for non-member countries to participate in the activity on Mutual Acceptance of Data involving the use of OECD test guidelines and observations of the OECD principles of good laboratory practice.

#### **Agenda Item 5 - Programme Area B**

22. The discussion focused on the two distinct areas of harmonization of classification and labelling of chemicals (ISG/95.4) work: the technical work needed to achieve harmonization of the criteria and the work to secure the political support and framework to implement the harmonization of systems.

23. A number of participants asked that several important issues be considered in the process. Classification and labelling must take account of climatic conditions and use patterns in developing countries and hazard communication schemes (e.g. hazard labelling, Material Safety Data Sheets) need to be adapted for local circumstances (e.g. pictograms, languages).

24. Concerns were expressed that appropriate consideration be given to the complexities of the issues. The EC in particular emphasized the need to identify the precise fields of application and that whilst the work had significant trade implications, advances should not be made that do not take full account of occupational and consumer health, environmental and transport issues. It was emphasized that the work was not an alternative to proper risk management of chemicals but an aid for fulfilling local obligations to provide appropriate information to all concerned groups.

25. The key point of the discussion revolved around how to proceed with the implementation. Reference was made to the range of available international instruments. It was emphasized that any system established must include an updating mechanism as the results of new scientific work become available.

26. Some speakers favoured immediate initiation of work on the political and implementation issues, while others suggested that this should be delayed until 1996 when the technical work would have been nearly completed, thus providing a stronger basis for the political discussions. There was also some discussion of the formation of an *ad hoc* group to deal with the implementation arrangements but other speakers thought that such a group might complicate the work of the existing Coordinating Group for the Harmonization of Chemical Classification Systems (CG/HCCS) and add additional complexities to the process. Following a debate of these issues there was a consensus by the ISG that:

- the CG/HCCS should be strengthened with additional membership, particularly from the developing countries.
- to avoid duplication of effort, the CG/HCCS should undertake efforts to increase the awareness among national authorities on their work in particular its scope and progress.
- domestic coordination in formulating national positions on harmonization remained a key factor and the ISG urged all participants to promote such a coordinated approach.
- the CG/HCCS should be asked to report back to the next ISG with a detailed report on technical work and its progress in view of the considerable work being undertaken during 1995.
- the CG/HCCS should be asked to consider the mechanisms for implementation. The Group should report to the ISG 2 on how progress could best be made on political matters, particularly non-consensus issues.

Developing countries while appreciating the stage of development of Area B initiatives wished to have access to the underlying principles and requested that the CG/HCCS should develop such guidance. One option was to focus on the ILO Chemicals Convention (170), 1990.

#### **Agenda Item 6 and 9 - Programme Areas C and F**

27. In relation to Information Exchange on Toxic Chemicals and Chemical Risks (see ISG/95.5 and ISG/95.8) four issues were discussed: (i) the need to promote the availability in all countries of data on chemicals for chemical risk assessment and management, (ii) implementation of the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure in relation to the current revised London Guidelines through a legally-binding instrument, (iii) the extension of the PIC procedure to a wider range of chemicals and (iv) the strengthening of national capacities to control illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous goods.

28. The ISG recognized that adequate access to appropriate evaluated information adaptable to local circumstances was essential for all countries as a prerequisite to safe use of chemicals in the development process. This programme area was related to all the others. Many international activities were directed towards providing such information, as well as the institutional arrangements and the human resource development in countries for chemicals information generation, handling and use. Certain of these activities were specifically directed towards the implementation of the PIC procedure in the context of overall chemical safety capacity building in developing countries.

29. Concern was expressed that, while a great deal of high quality guidance was being prepared by the IOMC participating organizations, there was an apparent lack of communication concerning the availability of information and its delivery. It was proposed that the IOMC undertake a review of information delivery, including making

recommendations for priority activities to meet the needs of countries. It was proposed that the UNEP/IRPTC take the lead in coordinating the preparation of a report for ISG 2.

30. Note was taken of the information document on the establishment of a global network on chemicals (GINC). Japan strongly supported the development of such a network under the auspices of an IPCS project and proposed the promotion of a pilot activity for the Asian region. Other countries also supported the undertaking of a project to establish a GINC in all regions. Attention was called to the need for including access to information on chemical technologies, chemical risk reduction approaches, as well as country generated data appropriate to local conditions and circumstances.

31. Concerning the implementation of the PIC procedure there was broad support for developing legally-binding mechanisms with the provisions that;

- full account was taken of experience in applying the current voluntary system;
- the arrangement was restricted to the current scope of the voluntary PIC procedure;
- criteria for including chemicals in the PIC procedure be further evaluated;
- countries not yet having done so designate their national authorities for PIC;
- importing countries establish mechanisms to restrict, when they deem appropriate, the importation and manufacture for domestic use of PIC-designated chemicals;
- a legally-binding approach may include voluntary arrangements for domestic implementation;
- training in implementation of these mechanisms be established.

32. It was observed that account should be taken of the costs involved in developing a legally-binding instrument and how such costs could be minimized. It was observed that in many developing countries implementation of the amended London Guidelines presented difficulties due to infrastructure constraints. Additional national capacity building would be required to implement in these countries a legally-binding PIC procedure.

33. The support for a broadening of the PIC procedure to a wider range of chemicals and process technologies came mainly from environmental NGOs. Most countries considered that in view of the variety of issues involved and given existing general requirements for classification, packaging, labelling and material data sheets for chemicals, it was better to concentrate initially on establishing a legally-binding instrument for a restricted range of chemicals and exclude process technologies. It was observed that various international conventions on chemicals (e.g. ILO 170 and ILO 174) as well as conventions related to maritime transport of goods, had requirements for prior informed consent or notification. Some countries were of the opinion that the statement of the CSD in May 1994 to expand the work on a legally-binding mechanism for the PIC to include export bans on domestically

prohibited chemicals should be considered at a later time, taking into account the experiences gathered.

34. An environmental NGO suggested that the PIC procedure be able to include hazardous chemicals and pesticides causing health or environmental problems under conditions of use in developing countries and economies in transition and in particular those pesticides in WHO/FAO Classification Groups 1a, 1b and 2.

35. Concerning the prevention of illegal international traffic in toxic and dangerous products, it was recognized that a sufficient number of countries need to put in place control legislation as a basis for further legal international instruments to halt such illegal traffic. Strengthening implementation of the PIC procedure was an important element.

#### **Agenda Item 7 - Programme Area D**

36. The main topics discussed concerning risk reduction (see ISG 95.6) and for which background papers had been made available were the use of pollutant release and transfer registers, pesticide risk reduction, contingency planning and management of accidents and poison control facilities. Additional topics brought up for discussion in plenary were the control of persistent organic pollutants and the development of cleaner technologies. Note was taken of the ongoing work of the industrial sector in the context of Responsible Care and the implementation of the Code of Ethics in the International Trade in Chemicals.

37. Work of OECD, IPCS and UNITAR, in regard to Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (PRTRs) was noted. The ISG recommended that the results of the UNITAR pilot studies on the establishment of PRTRs in Mexico, Egypt and the Czech Republic be shared with other countries. NGOs considered this initiative a key element for future national risk reduction measures.

38. Many countries expressed concern about the problems of accidents, poisoning and contamination of underground water by pesticides as well as of the misuse in developing countries of pesticide containers for food and water storage. The need for pesticide risk reduction actions was emphasized. Assistance from the International Organizations, bilateral assistance agencies and industry was sought in creating awareness about the risks of pesticides and in training in their proper use with appropriate protective equipment. Countries were requested to share their experience in reduction in the use of pesticides. Each country needed an adequate pesticide registration mechanism. Note was taken of a project to promote the implementation of the FAO International Code of Practice on Distribution and Use of Pesticides. Note was also taken of the ongoing work of FAO to promote the implementation of the International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides in Latin American and the Caribbean, Africa and the Asia and Pacific Regions.

39. The need for adequate preparedness and planning for response to and follow-up of chemical accidents was recognized, which should be part of national programmes for emergency response and disaster preparedness. Note was taken of the ILO Code of Practice in Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents and the UNEP/APELL programme as mechanisms for implementing chemical accident preparedness and response and Governments were urged to make use of these mechanisms. Following the joint activity of

IPCS/OECD/UNEP - (IEPAC)/WHO (ECEH) on the health aspects of chemical accidents, training and education in these aspects were being undertaken in various regions and further guidance on response to and follow-up of chemical incidents being prepared. It was recommended that national profiles (see para 48) should include information concerning existing infrastructure for prevention and response to chemical accidents including poison control centres and related facilities.

40. Note was taken of the background paper outlining the current situation concerning poison control centres and related facilities throughout the world and a strategy for establishing such centres and facilities and for promoting collection of harmonized comparable data on chemical exposures and their follow-up. Participants from developing countries of all regions stressed the importance of setting up and strengthening such facilities in countries, as well as of training health sector staff in dealing with acute, chemical exposures. IPCS Guidelines on poison control and on strengthening related facilities were available. The IPCS/INTOX package provided an information management tool and database which could be used by countries at poisons centres to harmonize collection of data about poisoning.

41. The meeting welcomed an offer by the representative of Turkey to hold a regional meeting in order to introduce the IPCS/INTOX project and promote the establishment of poison control facilities in countries of the region. Several countries requested similar workshops to be organized in their regions and called for financial support of donor countries in organizing regional activities and in establishing poison control facilities in countries.

42. It was observed that there were a number of fora in which persistent organic pollutants were being addressed both for their transboundary effects (UNECE) and marine pollution from land sources. Several countries expressed the wish that the Forum should examine the linkages between groups addressing POPs in Agenda 21 Chapters 17 and 19. The development of criteria to determine if a chemical was suitable as a POP candidate was being progressed through the U.N. Economic Commission for Europe Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP) with further progress being carried forward by a Philippines/Canada co-sponsored workshop to be held in Vancouver, 4-8 June 1995. A number of countries supported this development which, when transboundary effects were further quantified, was considered an appropriate activity for international action. The USA, with the support of Mauritius and Slovakia, requested that Canada and the Philippines add a meeting following their technical meeting in Vancouver to explore the feasibility of coordinating and channeling possible global actions on POPs. This meeting, in addition to government experts, should include relevant international bodies. The ISG endorsed the proposal by these countries and considered that the proposed feasibility meeting would be important to the future work of the ISG. As part of this consideration, the linkages between groups addressing POPs in Agenda 21 Chapters 17 and 19 should be examined.

43. Developing countries from Africa and other regions requested that a list of POPs be prepared with a summary of their uses and means of disposal. Canada offered to make available a report on POPs on request. It was suggested by African countries that consideration be given to persistent inorganic pollutants, such as mercury.

44. An environmental NGO proposed that the Forum consider initiating a work

programme to phase out organochlorine and organophosphorus chemicals. An alternative, "differentiated approach", based on considerations for the unique properties and activity of individual compounds was proposed by other NGOs. Countries supported the need to consider specific organochlorine and organophosphorus compounds on a case-by-case basis. This was an issue of concern to developing countries where a number of these chemicals may still need to be used for vector control in the health sector. International assistance was urgently needed for work on the identification of substitutes.

45. Note was taken of the work to promote the development and use of clean technology regarding the production and use of chemicals, particularly the plans to create clean technology centres in Latin American countries. Note was taken also of the ongoing UNIDO/UNEP programme on cleaner production centers in 20 developing and economies in transition economy countries. Five to eight centers will become operational in 1995. WHO/PAHO, UNIDO and UNEP were invited to organize a workshop to analyze mechanisms aimed at improving information exchange and technology transfer as a result of the work in Latin America. It was recognized that other countries also need this information.

#### **Agenda Item 8 - Programme Area E**

46. Developing countries identified national capacity, regional networking and access to information as the three most urgent priorities for implementing chemical safety in their countries. With respect to national capacity building key elements were coordination at the national level, appropriate legislation with clear implementation mechanisms and equipment to ensure compliance, improved training opportunities and public awareness. The regional meetings also identified the need for capacity building in the areas of poisoning management. Additionally, cleaner production and pollution prevention through improved information access, and disposal of pesticide wastes were identified as major concerns.

47. With respect to establishment of regional networks on chemical information exchange it was suggested that this be done through international organization cooperation at the central and regional levels. It was requested that an inventory be made of information exchange networking arrangements and a report prepared for ISG 2. Note was taken of a number of existing WHO, ILO, UNEP, UNIDO and FAO sponsored regional networks which could serve as models of networks for information exchange. Reference was also made to the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety and CANUTEC (24 Hour Emergency Advice Centre), Emergency Phone (1 613) 996 6666, Enquiry Phone (1 613) 992 4624 information systems which could be accessed by all countries.

48. The ISG strongly supported the development of national profiles on the current capabilities and capacities for the management of chemicals as a crucial element to identify gaps in national infrastructure and hence needs for regional and national cooperation (e.g. information networks, training). International and bilateral assistance was encouraged to facilitate this task. The ISG welcomed the UNITAR project on national profiles under the umbrella of the IOMC and encouraged the completion of a guidance document as soon as possible. It was proposed that national profiles should be completed for the ISG 2. Some regions suggested a broader scope for the national profiles to include cleaner production and pollution prevention capacity, as well as the capacity to undertake environmental and health impact assessments as a tool to pollution prevention.

49. The ISG requested that the IOMC provide for ISG 2 an inventory of ongoing activities, programmes and projects related to chemical safety being carried out by international organizations. It was stressed that better coordination among these activities needed to be established to improve their outcomes and avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts. The IOMC was requested to have each of its partners provide a region by region synopsis of all chemical safety activities. The synopsis would detail in-country programmes including costings, time frames and outputs. The IOMC would be requested to coordinate this activity hence providing an analysis of chemical safety activities across agencies. Such an inventory could also be made by countries for projects being carried out at the bilateral level.

50. The ISG suggested that improved coordination of activities with the international agencies could be achieved by incorporating the IFCS focal point into the international organizations' information networks.

51. The need was reemphasized for all countries to establish their own mechanisms for coordination among relevant ministries and other institutions dealing with sound management of chemicals as well as the need for comprehensive national chemical safety policies and legislation.

52. Other issues identified in regional group meetings included chemical safety problems associated with small scale industrial enterprises and the need for information to assist application of Environmental and Health Impact Assessments procedures and pollution prevention strategies in the siting of new industries.

53. Note was taken of Capacity 21 of UNDP which has been established as an instrument for capacity building including human resource development. Countries could approach UNDP directly or through UNDP country representatives.

#### **Agenda Item 11 - Future Work**

54. The ISG in considering the activities of the United Nations Environment Programme in relation to the sound management of chemicals agreed by consensus to express to the UNEP Governing Council and the U.N. Commission on Sustainable Development, its concern over the proposed cut in the UNEP budget for chemicals management by more than 50%. This reduction would seriously undermine UNEP's ability to fulfill its responsibilities under the Agenda 21, Chapter 19. The ISG specifically:

- urges ISG representatives to convey these concerns directly to their country's representatives to the May 1995 UNEP Governing Council meeting; and
- requests the President of the IFCS to convey these concerns directly to the UNEP Executive Director immediately following this ISG meeting and asks for a response to these concerns prior to the May 1995 UNEP Governing Council meeting which would be distributed to IFCS representatives.

55. Recognizing that the success of the Forum depends on broad participation of countries, and the importance of all countries participating in Forum meetings, the ISG is

committed to find the ways and means to achieve this. Twinning arrangements for covering travel costs of countries in need of support should be sought both with other countries as well as NGOs.

56. As the work of the IFCS benefits all sectors of society, there was a consensus that the necessary financial support for its work should be sought from all three groups of participants of the Forum, i.e. governments, intergovernmental and non-governmental.

57. The difficulties of establishing networking arrangements amongst countries for the work of the Forum in some regions are considerable. The ISG requested that the IOMC, in preparation for the second session of the ISG, develop a proposal on how this situation might be improved. It was noted that these proposals could be developed based on information from countries on their experiences in the implementation and operation of existing regional networks.

58. In response to the requests for access to and exchange of information on chemical safety, the ISG recommended that a seminar/workshop be held in conjunction with the next ISG meeting to display and introduce available literature and electronic information (such as CD-ROM databases, Internet possibilities etc). A number of governments expressed an interest in providing a demonstration so that participants could gain "hands-on" experience.

### **Closing Ceremony**

In closing the meeting, the President observed that the discussion in the regional working groups had added an exciting dimension to the work of the ISG, account of which needed to be taken in planning the second meeting. She called for resources to be made available to the Secretariat for organizing this second meeting, she thanked the Belgian authorities for hosting the first meeting, the staff of the Belgian Ministry of Health and Environment for the local organization, and the interpreters for their work. Recognizing the considerable constrained resources of the Forum Secretariat, the President expressed the appreciation of the meeting for the excellent preparation and servicing of the ISG by the Secretariat. Dr Lakhansky, on behalf of the Belgian authorities, thanked colleagues for their participation in the first meeting of the ISG and wished them a safe return to their countries.

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20-23 MARCH 1995, BRUGES**

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## **REVISED CORE BUDGET FOR THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL FORUM ON CHEMICAL SAFETY (IFCS) AND ITS SECRETARIAT**

As stated in the Resolution on the Establishment of an Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (Annex 1, para 13.1 and Annex II, para 1) adopted by the INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON CHEMICAL SAFETY, there are two parts of the core budget for the IFCS:

1. Expenditures related to the Forum, the Intersessional Group, and ad hoc working groups established by the Forum.
2. The resources for the Secretariat which serves the Forum and its subsidiary arrangements.

### **1. Meetings of the Forum and its subsidiary arrangements.**

- 1.1. Concerning the meetings of the Forum and its present subsidiary arrangements (i.e. the Intersessional Group), it is understood that countries agreeing to host a meeting would provide the required organization and administrative support, including meeting facilities, interpretation and translation.
- 1.2. Travel and attendance expenses

It had been agreed at the first session of the Forum that for the Forum and its subsidiary arrangements, expenses incurred in connection with travel and attendance would be borne by each participant. The ISG, recognizing that the success of the Forum depends on broad participation of countries, and the importance of all countries participating in Forum meetings, reaffirmed their commitment to finding the ways and means to achieve this. Twinning arrangements for covering travel costs of countries in need of support should be sought both with other countries as well as industrial NGOs.

### **2. Secretariat**

While it was agreed that the Secretariat resources required would depend on the work proposed by the Forum and its subsidiary arrangements, a basic minimum level of resources would be necessary for the Forum and its subsidiary arrangements to operate.

The budget for the Secretariat has been revised to take into consideration developments which have occurred since the first session of the Forum in April 1994.

## ESTIMATED BUDGET FOR THE SECRETARIAT

### BUDGET 1 April 1995 - 31 March 1996

PERSONNEL	MAN MONTHS	US \$
Executive Secretary	4 mm	54,000
Senior Programme Officer	11 mm	62,000 <sup>1</sup>
Technical Officer	9 mm	103,950
1½ Secretaries	18 mm	106,050
Consultants	9 mm	90,000
Duty travel		80,000
Material and supplies (including translation)		80,000
		-----
		576,000
Programme support cost (13%)		74,880
		-----
		650,880

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<sup>1</sup> Current incumbent of the post is assigned on an informal arrangement with the Government of Canada, which provides an additional 70 000 Canadian dollars towards the salary costs (April 1994 to April 1996).

## BUDGET 1 April 1996 - 31 March 1997

PERSONNEL	MAN MONTHS	US \$
Executive Secretary	5 mm	67,500
Senior Programme Officer	6 mm	69,300
Technical Officer	12 mm	138,600
2 Secretaries	24 mm	141,400
Consultants	12 mm	120,000
Duty travel		90,000
Material and supplies (plus translation)		80,000
		-----
		706,800
Programme support cost (13%)		91,884
		-----
		798,684

(0)

**AFRICAN REGIONAL GROUP MEETING**

**CHAIRMAN:** Mali  
**Rapporteur:** Mauritius

**A. POISON INFORMATION CENTRES**

Discussion centered on the creation of Poison Information Centres in the African countries. It was noted that very few African countries have Centres. In fact, only Algeria, Libya, Morocco, South Africa, Tunisia and Zimbabwe have proper Poison Information Centres. Some other countries, e.g Kenya and Tanzania, have a Centre which needs strengthening.

The WHO representatives announced the imminent availability of the IPCS/INTOX Package in English and French and proposed the holding of two workshops in the African Region. One for the Eastern and Southern African Region and one for the Central/Western African Region. A workshop for Eastern Mediterranean countries will be held in June this year. The representative of Angola requested to have a workshop in Portuguese for the five or six Portuguese speaking countries. A list of countries interested in having Poison Information Centres will be compiled and donor countries identified for support.

The representative of Belgium said that during talk on bilateral cooperation this could be discussed. This could also be discussed under the Lome Convention.

It was felt that setting up of fully equipped Poison Information Centres in the African region with adequate training is a necessity due to the large number of poisoning cases, instances of chemical accidents and the wide variety of toxic chemicals used.

**B. REGIONAL NETWORKS**

It was felt that a system of regional networks would be useful for the exchange of information on chemical safety among countries in the region.

The representative of South Africa stated that his country is in the process of setting up a network which could be accessed by other countries. He wanted help from OECD countries as to the appropriate database and software.

The Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety has a programme to provide translated Safety data sheets and can make such data available. The Canadian Centre is prepared to help other countries. The representative of FAO said that three such networks are already in place in certain African region and countries may wish to investigate whether these may be useful as a means of information exchange.

It was also noted that several countries in the region have C.I.S. Centres (Labour Information Centres on Safety). These could be reinforced to have a National Alert Programme incorporated.

The representative of ILO stated that the C.I.S. Centres disseminates information on safety at work, legislation and also carry out training on safety at work. He also announced that soon all C.I.S. Centres will be linked electronically with the International Alert System.

Finally it was felt that access to informatics is a very important aspect on chemical management and that a list of available databases either accessed directly on through Internet could be made available to countries in the African Region.

### **C. COUNTRY EXPERIENCES**

Tunisia, Angola, Guinea, Kenya, South Africa, Mauritius and Mali provided an insight on the Management of Chemicals in their countries. It was noted that some countries in the region have made some progress in chemical management; whereas others are still struggling to set up a mechanism for the management of chemicals. It was important for the countries in the region to first identify the problems and set up interdepartmental coordination committees and then get international help. The representative of Tunisia announced that his country has a good mechanism for control of dangerous chemicals and has also embarked on a programme of substitution of C.F.C.'s. A lack of trained personnel and equipment for proper enforcement and implementation was noted by the countries.

The representative of Mali noted that another problem faced was the disposal of Pesticide Waste. Due to lack of knowledge and information, pesticides are disposed of in unsafe ways. Help to solve this problem was solicited. A three year project on pesticides disposal was initiated in 1994. Information on the project is available from FAO.

### **D. REGIONAL COOPERATION**

The representative of Gabon proposed that the Pan-African Council for Science and Technology could be the forum of regional cooperation.

The representative of ICCA stated that the Canadian Centre for Occupational Health and Safety could provide databases for those countries making a request.

It was felt that International Agencies having regional centres, could coordinate their activities and help in regional cooperation. There was also concern expressed on the management of hazardous waste. The representative of a non-governmental organization (Advisory Committee on Existing Chemicals of Environmental Relevance/BUA) from Germany said his organization is willing to share information if this was on the agenda of the ISG.

The representative of UNITAR said that his organization is collaborating with

UNEP and FAO to set up Regional Training Programmes. He announced two regional training programmes for the African region, one workshop for the Southern African and Eastern African region in June 1995 and a second workshop for West Africa and Central Africa in early 1996. The opinion was expressed that the OECD could include chemical safety in their Agenda.

UNITAR should identify countries from the ISG for pilot projects on National Profiles.

UNITAR also announced that a pilot project on Development of National Profiles has been proposed.

Emphasis was put on regional cooperation. This is a priority and help of other countries like Canada and Germany would be welcome. It was announced that IRPTC and ECETOC will make available the CIRC to all countries.

Finally the problem of communication between International Agencies and local focal points was raised. It was felt that all communications on chemical safety including pesticides should be sent to IFCS focal points along with other focal points existing.

#### **E. ACTIVITIES ON PROGRAMME AREA D**

The representative from South Africa stated that his country has an ongoing programme for promotion of a Code of Ethics with the chemical and allied industries association as part of their responsible care programme.

- It was felt that National Committees on Disaster Prevention should be set up in all countries. Specially on disaster caused by chemicals. There is also need to have regional cooperation since many hazardous goods are transported by rail and road from one country to another.

Members expressed concern about the extensive use of pesticides in certain countries, chemical accidents, poisonings, and contamination of underground water. Another problem expressed was the wide use of pesticide containers for food and water storage. Help was requested from International Agencies to solve this problem, through creating awareness and training programmes. In this field, national experiences were reported and basic documents are available. An FAO project on the implementation of the International Code of Conduct on the distribution and use of pesticides will be initiated in Africa in 1995 and should help to address some of these problems.

Requests were also made to certain countries like Sweden and Denmark to assist in the reduction in the use of pesticides in these countries drawing from their own experiences.

GIFAP announced that several pilot projects have been started in developing countries to help manage pesticides. GIFAP has advised on proper protective clothing adapted to local conditions e.g. an inexpensive cotton apron in Thailand.

GIFAP is looking for funds to help other countries, especially in the African Region.

The representative of Angola requested help from UNITAR to carry out studies for Registration of Pesticides. He said that many chemicals are used in his country which cannot be identified.

Request were also made to have systems of APELL in more countries of Africa.

#### **F. PROGRAMME AREA E**

It was felt that this Programme Area is most important for a proper management of chemicals in the developing countries including the development of National Profiles.

Training programmes were requested for countries in the region. Kenya mentioned a programme which is run for the twelve countries in East Central and Southern Africa in Hygiene and Occupational Health and Safety. A request was made by the representative of Kenya for international help to include chemical safety in their programmes.

The representative of WHO announced that Capacity 21 of UNDP has established an instrument for capacity building. Countries could approach UNDP for help in training. UNDP country representatives could be contacted.

#### **G. PERSISTENT ORGANIC POLLUTANTS (POPs)**

The representative of Gabon wanted inorganic pollutants also to be considered e.g. Mercury is extensively used in gold refining. The representative of Guinea was concerned about PCBs in his country as in other countries and wanted help to dispose of this hazardous substance. WHO representative said that DDT was recommended for indoor use only in malaria control only; this was recommended by a study group.

It was finally felt that a list of Persistent Organic Pollutants be prepared and sent to African countries and a summary of the use of these chemicals be made.

The disposal of these pollutants should also be considered including setting up of incinerators.

## LATIN AMERICAN REGIONAL GROUP MEETING

**CHAIRMAN:** Mexico  
**Rapporteur:** Mexico

The Latin American Regional Group Meeting was held with the participation of Brazil, Colombia, Mexico, Nicaragua, Trinidad and Tobago, as well as from Canada, United States of America and international industrial and non-governmental organizations.

### 1. PROGRAMME AREAS

Although the group considered that all the recommendations are relevant it felt that it was necessary to concentrate first on the following priorities for action of the ICCS 1994:

#### PROGRAMME AREA A

Programme Area A was considered as the basis for the implementation of the other programme areas.

The group focused its attention on the relevance of identifying which risk assessment methods are appropriate to be used in the region, as well as on the criteria to select chemicals as priority considerations. It was agreed the other members should be provided with the documentation and other information gathered and discussed during the IPCS/OECD Raleigh, N.C., meeting on the issue. This information should be evaluated and discussed to have a consensual position by the ISG meeting in 1996.

#### PROGRAMME AREA D

1. Concerning pollutant release and transfer registers (priority for action no. 2), the group recommended that the results of the pilot study being carried out by UNITAR in Mexico, be shared with the other countries of the hemisphere. It was also considered important to have access to the document on the matter being prepared by the OECD.
2. ICCA should be invited to provide an inventory of industries that have implemented the Responsible Care Programme and Codes (priority for action no. 3). As a meeting on that subject is being organized this year in Brazil, it was considered important to use the opportunity to inform other industries of the region regarding these issues, so as to obtain their support for the activities concerning chemical safety management promoted within the framework of the IFCS, as well as the Code of Ethics for the international trade of chemicals.
3. The group invited UNIDO/UNEP to inform about plans to create Clean

Technology Centers in Latin American countries and to share related experiences (priority for action no. 4). It was also recommended to explore the participation of Latin American Industry in the elaboration of the ISO 14-000 environmental management standard. The group invited CEPIS/PAHO/UNIDO/UNEP to organize a workshop to analyze mechanisms aimed at improving information exchange and technology transfer to support efforts towards implementing the use of clean technologies in the region.

4. The group agreed to invite Governments to implement, as soon as possible, pesticide and lead risk reduction programmes and to inform on progress made in this area at the next meeting of the ISG in 1996 (priority for action no. 5).
5. It was recommended that the national profiles include information concerning the existing or planned infrastructure for prevention and response to chemical accidents and poison control centers in the region. PAHO/WHO were invited to support the efforts to strength national and regional capacities in these two fields (priorities for action no. 6, 7 and 8).

## **PROGRAMME AREA E**

1. National Profiles should be developed and presented at the 1996 ISG meeting; they should include existing legislation and liaison procedures, as well as clean production and pollution prevention capacity (priorities for action no. 2, 3, and 4). Between 1996/1997, an overall regional profile should be developed to serve as a basis for the establishment of a Latin American and Caribbean Regional Strategy for Chemical Safety supported by the IOMC.
2. The group agreed to request the IFCS Secretariat to convey to the IOCC an invitation to provide an inventory of ongoing activities, programmes and projects related to chemical safety being carried out by international organizations (priority for action no. 5). It feels that such an inventory could also be made for projects being carried out at the bilateral level. It was stressed that better coordination among these activities needed to be established to improve their results and avoid unnecessary duplication of efforts. Information is needed about intended outputs and level of funding of these activities.

## **II. OTHER RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **IPCS Latin American Meeting:** The group took note of the intention of IPCS/PAHO to organize a meeting on Chemical Safety in the Region. It stressed the importance that such a meeting take place at the soonest possible date (tentative date 21-22/9/1995) and at the latest before the next ISG meeting with the participation of the Latin American and Caribbean countries that form part of the Intersessional Group.
2. **Pollution Prevention:** The group stressed the importance of the use of environmental impact assessment as an instrument to prevent chemical pollution and the need to

include in the national profiles information about its application by countries of the region.

3. Background Documents ISG/1995: The Group asked that the Secretariat be made aware of its understanding that background documents are aimed at merely supporting and informing the work of the ISG. Since they do not reflect a consensus they cannot be considered approved of when the agenda item is examined.

## **Report of the East European Regional Group Meeting**

The Central and East European (CEE) countries (Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia), together with the representatives of Germany, Belgium, Sweden, Switzerland, UK, USA and representatives of some IGOs, have analyzed the situation in CEE countries according to the topics discussed in the ISG-plenary session. Results of their discussion are:

### **1. Exchange of Experiences, what are the problems:**

- 1.1. In CEE countries there are transient economies at different levels. Due to privatization the number of small scale enterprises and employers have increased, while in many countries the number of employees have decreased. The present situation has influenced chemical safety disadvantageously (operation of the different institutions and inspectorates is insufficient).
- 1.2. In the majority of countries up-to-date comprehensive legislation of chemical safety is only in preparation (at very different stages). No information is available from many countries of the Region.
- 1.3. The majority of countries have no comprehensive national policy in the field of chemical safety including chemical risk assessment and risk management.
- 1.4. In the majority of countries different parts of chemical safety are inspected, controlled and regulated by different ministries (Ministry of Health, Environment, Labour, Industry, Agriculture, Trade, etc.). The individual parts of chemical safety activities are relatively well organized and are operating at a sufficient level, but missing the coordination inhibits the effectiveness of the national chemical safety.
- 1.5. In the Region, the human-ecological situation is not satisfactory. Both the health status of the population and the state of the environment are cause for concern. In some countries the average life expectancy decreased. In some countries the population has also decreased. As to the environment many promising programmes have begun. As to the health status: there has been no substantial health improvement.

### **2. Regional Networks**

Taking into consideration the limited resources, different national policies, geographical situation and traditions, and aiming at efficiency, we recognize that it is reasonable to form sub-regions, for example:

- (i) Baltic Countries
- (ii) Visegrad Four and some other Central European Countries (Croatia and

Slovenia)

### 3. National profiles

As members of the ISG, the Czech Republic, Estonia and Hungary have prepared their national profiles.

### 4. Programme Area D - in particular, Priorities for Action No. 6, 7 and 8

4.1 In the majority of countries participating in the Regional meeting the regulations dealing with the recommendations of 1993 ILO Convention (No 174) on the Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents are currently in preparation or have already been issued. Similarly, the majority of countries are preparing regulations dealing with the prevention of Transboundary Effects of Industrial Accidents (according to UN/ECE).

4.2 The majority of countries are also preparing and planning to introduce a national system for emergency preparedness and response, including a strategy for education and training of personnel, with the aid of, *inter-alia*, the APELL programme and the ILO Code of Practice on the Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents (1991).

4.3 According to the ISG/B7 document, only Poland is a member of Group A. Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Hungary, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, and Slovenia belong to Group B of the ISG/B7 document. Some of the countries of the Region belong to Group C (Ukraine), or to Table II (Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania) of the ISG document. No information is available from the other countries of the Region for the ISG Regional Meeting concerning the situation of poisons control centres.

### 5. Programme Area E - in particular, Priorities for Action No 4 (National coordination)

The countries participating in the meeting have common intentions and ambitions to join the EU and the OECD programme on the Mutual Acceptance of Data (Hungary is already a member of this OECD activity). Efforts for harmonization with the EU directives and OECD chemical policies ensure the formation of the liaison of all parties involved in chemical safety activity within a country should be established. The liaison body on chemical safety has been established in the Czech Republic. The majority of countries plan to establish a national intersectorial body that will be responsible for the coordination of activities of all ministries involved in chemical safety.

### 6. Persistent Organic Pollutants (POP) and asbestos

In the majority of countries there are programmes to decrease use or to ban persistent pesticides (organochlorine hydrocarbons, organic metal compounds, etc.), artificial fertilizers (containing heavy metals, organic sulphur, phosphorous, etc.), certain industrial chemicals (some chlorinated hydrocarbons, PCB, PBB etc.), ozone depleting substances (e.g. freons)

according to the Montreal Protocol and to properly treat hazardous wastes (according to the Basel Convention). The majority of countries deal with the restriction and/or ban of different types of asbestos, in particular crocidolite. Some of the countries have established a PIC committee with Designated National Authority.

## 7. Note

The Regional Meeting expressed its concern that the representative of the Russian Federation did not attend.

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND RESOLUTIONS

1. Each Central and East European country of the Meeting intends to carry out all the recommendations of Chapter 19 of Agenda 21 and those of the IFCS.

2. The Meeting specifically emphasizes:

2.1 Necessity of an up-to-date comprehensive national legislation (umbrella act) in the field of chemical safety in harmony with similar legislation of EU and OECD countries, which would:

- apply universally "the polluter pays principle"
- impose on producers, importers and users responsibility for generating and dispersing information
- introduce the national inventories of toxic chemicals and the notification of new chemicals
- enable implementation of the preventive measures on the basis of risk assessment

2.2 The detailed situation analysis for creating the national chemical safety strategies shall consider all the IFCS recommendations. Reports on the situation analysis are to be shared at least among countries of the subregions.

2.3 It is reasonable to form two subregions in the Region, namely:

- (1) The Baltic countries;
- (2) The Visegrad Four and other Central European countries (Croatia and Slovenia).

2.4 Preparation of a comprehensive national policy on chemical safety including policies on risk assessment and risk management.

2.5 Significance of establishing the national intersectorial co-ordinating committee/body in the field of chemical safety.

- 2.6 Significance of the development of information on chemicals in national languages and improvement of the flow of information among authorities and users of chemicals.
- 2.7 Legislation on accident prevention should be developed.
- 2.8 Monitoring systems on environmental and health data should be improved.
- 2.9 Significance of education and training in the field of risk assessment, risk management and training in the field of clinical toxicology and environmental health.

3. The Central and Eastern European Group recognizes that the implementation of the Recommendations specified in para 2 would be very difficult without international assistance. Therefore, the Group applies to the international organization for technical and financial support, especially in:

- implementation of modern legislation
- training in:
  - (a) risk reduction
  - (b) risk management
  - (c) clinical toxicology
  - (d) environmental health
- improvement in information flow

4. The countries of the Region recognize the importance of organizing both the regional and subregional workshops in the field of chemical safety, and of establishing instruments for better regional and sub-regional cooperation.

5. The Group recognizes that WHO Euro, through the European Centre for Environment and Health, offers full technical support for the implementation of the chemical safety priorities, including training and workshop programmes for the Central and East-European Group.

Clearly for this to progress with the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, there needs to be an appropriate budget allocated. This is an essential element for further progress.

6. The Central and Eastern European Group request that the Secretariat of the IFCS transmit the ISG Meeting Report to Governments of all the IFCS countries in the Region.

## Report on Asian Regional Group Meeting

The Asian Regional Group Meeting was held with the participation of Asian and other countries as well as international organizations and NGO's and chaired by Mr Wang YANGZU.

The meeting firstly exchanged each country's experience to try to identify the problems to be addressed. After that, the meeting focused on the two main issues, promotion of national capacity building and establishment of a regional network.

### 1. The Basic Idea

- (i) Establishment of chemical management systems in developing countries should be assisted by developed countries and international organizations.
- (ii) This regional co-operation is a part of the global international cooperation to implement Agenda 21 which includes international evaluation of chemicals and harmonization of classification and labelling among other goals related to the sound management of chemicals.

### 2. Specific recommendations

(A) With respect to national capacity building, the following five essential elements were identified as requiring implementation on a national basis, with regional and international cooperation and assistance :

- (i) A coordinating body at the national level.
- (ii) Proper legislation for chemical management.
- (iii) Education and training to build up capacity of governments for sound management of chemicals and enhancing public awareness of chemical risks.
- (iv) Technical assistance to establish poison control centers, chemical research centers and information centres on cleaner production and pollution prevention strategies, etc.
- (v) List of priority chemicals to focus on better management of chemicals based on a step by step process.

(B) With respect to a regional network, the following three points were addressed.

- (i) Cooperation with international organizations is necessary, especially with the regional offices of these international organizations involved in promoting the sound management of chemicals. There are a lot of activities and programme currently progressing in this region, descriptions of which should be, clearly compiled and submitted to the appropriate government agencies in countries in the region for better utilization and integration.
- (ii) National profiles are very important tools for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the national activities and programs on the sound management of chemicals and to identify the needs for regional and international cooperation. By the next ISG meeting, every country should prepare its own national profile. To facilitate the preparation of these national profiles, bilateral partnership and assistance by international organizations may be required.
- (iii) Developing countries need to establish proper legislation for the sound management of chemicals, poison control centers, inventories and information exchange mechanisms. International organizations and developed countries can also contribute to this effort through establishing training courses and information networks, which could be adapted for specific regional needs.

## The Vestibule Think Tank

### Background

As a consequence of considering Item 3 - Programme Area A, the first meeting of the Intersessional Group (ISG) agreed that in view of the interdependence of various programme areas and the limited time the Intersessional Group had to promote the completion of the work of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety, it would be useful to establish a think tank to prepare a paper on future priorities across all programme areas.

The ISG agreed that the think tank could present a paper for discussion under Agenda Item 11, "future work". It agreed that this paper could then be used to develop a work plan for future activities for the forum.

The think tank (group) was convened, in the vestibule, after the first day of the ISG meeting and was chaired by Australia. Participation comprised representatives from approximately 23 countries from all geographic areas making up the IFCS.

### Discussion

In considering the cross-sectional linkages, a large number of interdependencies were identified but time constraints for reporting to the ISG Plenary Session only allowed consideration of Programme Area A in detail. Following consideration of other areas, it was considered that Programme Areas E and F should be addressed within the regional sessions.

Developing country participants said that they placed great importance on the work of the Forum, since it presents an important and unique opportunity they had to interact directly with other governments on chemical safety. In order to take full advantage of this opportunity they added that further mechanisms needed to be found to enhance developing country input to the work of the Forum. All members considered that they needed a more interactive process at IFCS/ISG meetings.

The group agreed that developed countries will also benefit greatly from greater participation by developing countries in chemical safety activities since solutions to chemical safety problems may often require co-operation and sharing information between developed and developing countries. Developed countries could benefit from human and environmental exposure information under conditions in developing countries. The group noted that developed countries were able to offer to other countries the results of their experiences with the management of chemicals.

In considering potential priority programs, members of the group agreed that Programme Area A, *Expanding and accelerating international assessment of chemical risks*, formed a basis for other programmes; and that if good progress is made on Programme Area A the other programme areas would follow more easily. In particular, the group considered

that there was a strong link between Programme Area A and Programme Area E, *Strengthening of National Capabilities and Capacities for Management of Chemicals*.

Within program area A, the group agreed that recommendation 5, *Human exposure data, and good quality health effects data from developing countries should be generated*, was a good example of an area that needed to be linked to routes of exposure information in developing countries.

Developing countries considered the following to be impediments to their enhanced involvement in chemical safety programmes generally and the specific work areas of the Forum:

- difficulties with access to and use of information documents and related material;
- absence of supporting infrastructure for chemicals management;
- insufficient human resources development; and
- the need to strengthen political commitment regarding chemical safety issues.

The group noted that chemical safety activity at an international level needed to be supplemented by national programs.

While recognizing that considerable work has already been undertaken on dissemination of information in Environmental Health Criteria and other international evaluations, the group considered that within Programme Area A concern existed regarding the length, complexity and usefulness of such documents, their distribution, lack of input from developing countries and problems with language and translations. While not new, these concerns are real and should be addressed as via the proposed abbreviated Environmental Health Criteria documents and Health and Safety Guides.

### **Recommendations**

Participants of the Think Tank agreed on the following recommendations to strengthen both substantive discussions and the mechanisms:

- Developing countries should work to develop background papers for the next ISG describing their successes and describing their regional capacities, needs and obstacles to progress, while acknowledging the wide spectrum of capacities and levels of development in chemicals management between developing countries.
- Developed countries should be asked to prepare and circulate papers in advance of the next ISG meeting describing activities undertaken in response to Agenda 21 that relate directly to developing country needs.
- Papers should be critically analyzed to identify strengths and weaknesses in cross programme linkages.

- The group considered that the format of the think tank meeting had been productive and effective for both developed and developing countries. It was therefore considered that for future ISG meetings adequate time should be allocated at the beginning for regional groups of developing countries and representatives from developed countries to consider regional problems and develop views on agenda items.
- The next ISG meeting should begin with an appropriate amount of time set aside to focus on developing countries' needs, providing both developing and developed countries an opportunity to identify and try to meet the diverse needs of the developing countries.
- Greater opportunity should be provided in plenary sessions for government to government dialogues. Time should be reserved on the first day for lively exchanges on innovative concepts from both the developing and developed papers, rather than formal presentations.
- Greater involvement in the ISG by members could be achieved by increased use of working groups at the next ISG. An appropriate amount of time should be set aside for the use of working groups during the early part of ISG 2.
- Mainly with respect to developing countries, a survey to evaluate the usefulness of international evaluations and related documents should be carried out.

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