



5 INF
Agenda item 3

Chemical Safety for Sustainable Development

IFCS/FORUM-V/5 INF
Original: English
15 May 2006

FORUM V

Fifth Session
of the
Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety

Budapest, Hungary
25 - 29 September 2006

Information Exchange Network on
Capacity Building for the Sound management of Chemicals

Progress Report to Forum V

Prepared by: IFCS Forum Standing Committee

This document is available in English, French and Spanish

Introduction

Effective capacity building for the sound management of chemicals requires increased access to information on the planning, implementation, evaluation, and co-ordination of chemicals management activities. Recognizing this need, the Third Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS Forum III) supported the development of an Information Exchange Network on Capacity Building for the Sound Management of Chemicals (INFOCAP). Forum III recommendations on INFOCAP are listed in Annex 1.

The general objective of INFOCAP is to enhance effective coordination and cooperation among countries and organizations which are providing or receiving assistance related to the sound management of chemicals. Its purpose is to facilitate the systematic exchange and public accessibility of information and experiences which are relevant to all aspects of capacity building projects for the sound management of chemicals. INFOCAP can also contribute to the integration of chemicals related issues in other national development strategies. In establishing the Terms of Reference for INFOCAP, governments and organizations, through the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS), determined that INFOCAP should be a multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder system (i.e. open to governments, NGOs, and IGOs).

INFOCAP is an internet-based gateway (www.infocap.info) to information on capacity building for the sound management of chemicals. It allows users to post and find information regarding country National Chemicals Management Profiles, Priorities and Action Plans; sources of potential support for chemicals management projects; past, on-going and planned chemicals management projects; chemicals management guidance and training materials; and, key contacts in the field of chemical safety.

A Progress Report on the development and operation of the INFOCAP was presented to Forum IV.¹ The report outlined the goals, objectives and mandate of the Network, progress of work, promotional activities, and next steps related to the development of the Network. Delegates expressed strong support for INFOCAP, emphasizing the importance of designating Network Points of Contact and active participation by various parties involved in chemicals management through the contribution and use of information. The Forum requested a progress report assessing participation in and the utility of INFOCAP be prepared for Forum V.

Progress Report

In January/February 2005 the INFOCAP Steering Group carried out a survey to monitoring the progress and effectiveness of the Network. A summary report prepared by the INFOCAP Steering Group² was submitted to the Forum Standing Committee (FSC) for its consideration.

¹ Information Exchange Network on Capacity Building for the Sound Management of Chemicals (INFOCAP) – Report to Forum IV, Prepared by: INFOCAP Steering Group (IFCS/FORUM-IV/3 INF)

http://www.who.int/ifcs/documents/forums/forum4/meet_docs/en/index.html

² INFOCAP Evaluation and Future Direction Recommendations to the IFCS Forum Standing Committee (IFCS/INFOCAP/SG39)

http://www.who.int/ifcs/infocap/docs/SG39_INFOCAP_Evaluation_Future_with_SG34_annex.pdf

Based on the review, the FSC submitted recommendations prepared by the INFOCAP Steering Group to SAICM PrepCom3 on the future host, management and operation structure of INFOCAP³.

Based on the advice of the INFOCAP Steering Group (SG), the FSC recommended to PrepCom3 that:

- INFOCAP should remain in the SAICM as an important element for information exchange, and a key tool to assist countries and organizations as they move forward with implementing the activities outlined in SAICM; and,
- That the permanent host for INFOCAP, with the appropriate administrative structure and mandate, is accommodated in the final arrangements for SAICM implementation, e.g. hosted by the Secretariat responsible for supporting SAICM oversight and monitoring.

These recommendations are reflected in the SAICM documents adopted at the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM, 4-6 February 2006)⁴.

The SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy (OPS) includes "*capacity building and technical cooperation*" as an objective. Specifically the OPS states that a key objective is

17(e) To promote coordination and access to information on capacity building for the sound management of chemicals and to enhance transparency and accountability."

This corresponds directly to the overall goal of INFOCAP.

The Executive Summary of the Global Plan of Action (GPA) also calls for enhancing capacity building, and states that

D. Enhancing capacity-building

12. Capacity-building measures include training of personnel in order to provide the necessary skills to support the systematic implementation of the Strategic Approach at the local, national and regional levels in a coordinated way and across the full range of chemical safety needs, including strategic planning, risk assessment and management, testing and research and control of illegal traffic. Use would be made of information-exchange mechanisms on capacity-building in order to ensure coordination.

Moreover, the agreed functions to be performed by the SAICM secretariat provide the scope for the secretariat to undertake the responsibilities of the permanent host for INFOCAP.

These functions include:

- 28 (e) To provide guidance to stakeholders in the initiation of project proposals;*
- 28 (f) To provide information clearing-house services, such as provision of advice to countries on implementation of the Strategic Approach, referral of requests for*

³ Information Exchange Network on Capacity-building for the Sound Management of Chemicals - recommendation to the Preparatory Committee at its third session (SAICM/PREPCOM3/INF/8)

<http://www.chem.unep.ch/saicm/meeting/prepcom3/en/INF8.pdf>

⁴ http://www.chem.unep.ch/saicm/iccm_sec.htm

information to relevant sources, and facilitation of access to information and expertise in support of specific national actions;
28 (h) To promote the exchange of relevant scientific and technical information".

The ICCM, in its consideration of the implementation arrangements for the Strategic Approach, took up an issue identified the work of the preparatory committee in relation to SAICM GPA activity 214, that is "The permanent host for INFOCAP, with the appropriate administrative structure and mandate, should be accommodated in the final arrangements for SAICM implementation, e.g., hosted by the SAICM secretariat." The ICCM recommended that *"the Strategic Approach secretariat initiate discussions on the possible transfer of INFOCAP for administration by the Strategic Approach secretariat."*

The SAICM secretariat has communicated its readiness to accept the transfer of the INFOCAP system with the intention of administering INFOCAP on a trial basis until the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management and will report to the latter on progress. Depending on available resources and the relevance of the various components of the INFOCAP to the secretariat's mandate, the secretariat will endeavour to use the current INFOCAP system and update its database, at the same time as developing the secretariat's own information clearing house function called for in the SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy. It is hoped that INFOCAP will be able to make a strong contribution to that overall clearing house function of the secretariat and would be integrated appropriately. In due course, as resources allow, the secretariat will consider structural upgrades and modifications to the INFOCAP system and network in light of operating experience and the recommendations previously made by the INFOCAP steering group.

Annex 1

Forum III

Third Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety
Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, 15 – 20 October 2000
Final Report⁵

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Forum III agreed action items and recommendations

Information Exchange Network on Capacity Building for the Sound Management of Chemicals

Forum III supported the development of an Information Exchange Network on Capacity Building for the Sound Management of Chemicals, adopted, as an interim measure, Provisional Terms of Reference for such a network as presented to Forum III, and made the following recommendations in order to initiate concrete action by Forum IV:

- Instructed the Forum Standing Committee to assist in establishing a Steering/Advisory Group for the Network, including adoption of final Terms of Reference for the Network;
- Recommended that the IFCS secretariat serve as the Central Coordinating Node for the Network during its start-up phase;
- Requested the IFCS secretariat, in consultation with the stakeholder groups represented in the IFCS, and in coordination with the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) participating organizations and the World Bank, to establish the Network taking into account work ongoing and planned in other fora;
- Encouraged countries and organizations to provide support for the start-up phase for the Network in accordance with the different options provided in section 10 of the provisionally adopted Terms of Reference;
- Requested countries and organizations to designate points of contact for the Network (in accordance with Section 9 of the provisionally adopted Terms of Reference) and to provide information relevant to implementing the objectives of the Network; and
- Requested that a report on progress made and lessons learned during the start-up phase of the Network be made available at Forum IV for consideration and possible further action.

⁵ (IFCS/FORUM-IV/23w) <http://www.who.int/ifcs/documents/forums/forum3/en/index.html>

Forum III

Third Session of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety
Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, 15 – 20 October 2000
Final Report⁶

Annex 6

Priorities for Action beyond 2000

Programme Area E

Strengthening of national capabilities and capacities for management of chemicals

4. Enhanced access to information on various aspects of capacity building activities and needs related to the sound management of chemicals is a prerequisite for planning, implementing, evaluating and coordinating capacity building projects for the sound management of chemicals. As such it may also contribute to international, regional and national efforts to raise the awareness about the need for increased assistance to strengthen national capacities and capabilities for the sound management of chemicals.

The Forum supports the development of an Information Exchange Network on Capacity Building for the Sound Management of Chemicals within the framework of the IFCS and calls upon countries, international organizations, industry, labour unions, public interest groups and the academia to actively participate in this effort by 2003.

⁶ (IFCS/FORUM-IV/23w) <http://www.who.int/ifcs/documents/forums/forum3/en/index.html>