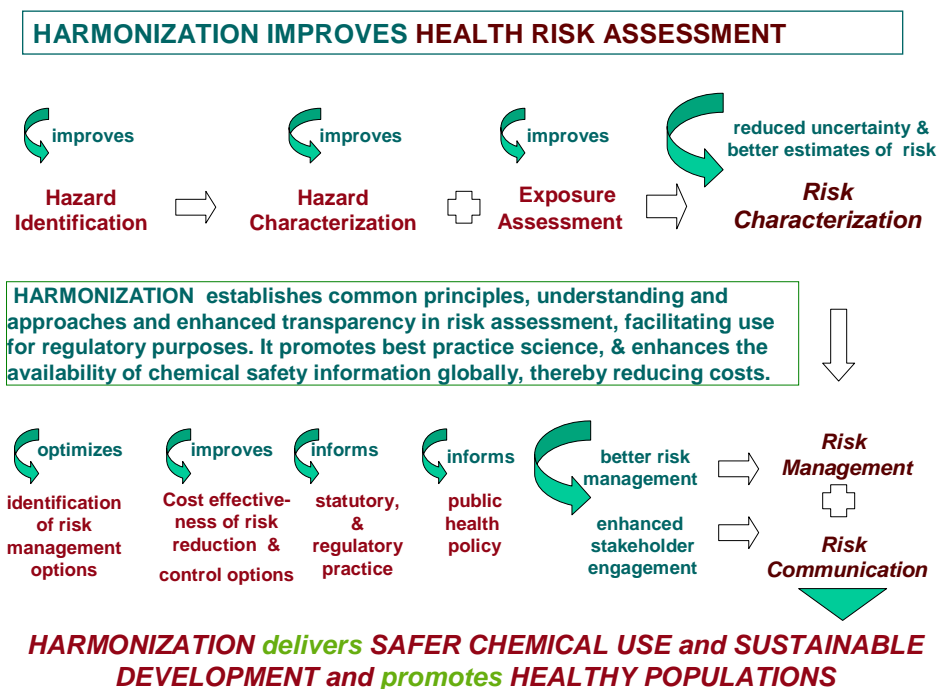


INTERNATIONAL PROGRAMME ON CHEMICAL SAFETY HARMONIZATION PROJECT STRATEGIC PLAN 2005-2009

Harmonization of approaches to the assessment of risk from exposure to chemicals

Goal

The IPCS Harmonization Project goal is *to improve chemical risk assessment globally, through the pursuit of common principles and approaches and hence, strengthen national and international management practices which deliver better protection of human health and the environment within the framework of sustainability.*



Contribution to the Achievement of International Commitments

The IPCS Harmonization Project enables governments and others to work towards the achievement of goals first outlined in Agenda 21 Chapter 19 in Rio in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, detailed in the recommendations of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety Bahia Declaration of 2000, reaffirmed by governments in the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) Plan of Implementation, and further elaborated by governments and other stakeholders in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) in Dubai 2006.

Chapter 19 of Agenda 21, adopted in 1992 at the **United Nations Conference on Environment and Development** (UNCED), recognized that assessing the risks to human health and the environment that a chemical may cause is a prerequisite to planning for its safe and beneficial use. However, it also recognized that risk assessment is resource-intensive and could be made cost-effective by strengthening international cooperation and better coordination, thereby making the best use of available resources and avoiding unnecessary duplication of effort. Chapter 19 called for improved methods for assessment of chemicals and a common framework for risk assessment, to enable decision makers to adopt adequate policies and measures to reduce risks posed by chemicals.

At **WSSD** governments renewed their commitment to Agenda 21 and made a commitment to "achieve, by 2020, that chemicals are used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment, using transparent science-based risk assessment procedures and science-based risk management procedures...".

SAICM was developed to support the WSSD commitment. It elaborates detailed objectives and a Global Plan of Action, the implementation of which will contribute to the achievement of the WSSD commitment. The Harmonization Project contributes to the implementation of SAICM by addressing the SAICM objective on Risk Reduction and the Global Plan of Action activity to "Develop and use new and harmonized methods for risk assessment". In May 2006 the 59th World Health Assembly urged Member States to take full account of the health aspects of chemical safety in national implementation of the SAICM, and requested WHO to facilitate implementation by the health-sector of the Strategic Approach, focusing on human health-related elements.

Aims and Achievements

The Harmonization Project aims to harmonize global approaches to chemical risk assessment, including by developing international guidance documents on specific issues. The guidance is intended for adoption and use in countries and by international bodies in the performance of chemical risk assessments. The guidance is developed by engaging experts worldwide. The project has been implemented in a step-wise approach, first sharing information and increasing understanding of methods and practices used by various countries, identification of areas where convergence of different approaches would be beneficial, and then developing guidance that enables implementation of harmonized approaches. The Project uses a building-block approach focusing at any one time on the aspects of risk assessment that are particularly important for harmonization.

The Project enables risk assessments (or components thereof) to be performed using internationally accepted methods and these assessments can then be shared to avoid duplication and optimize use of valuable resources for risk management. It also promotes sound science as a basis for risk management decisions, promotes transparency in risk assessment, and reduces unnecessary testing of chemicals. Advances in scientific

knowledge can be translated into new harmonized methods. International peer review of the methods promotes scientific integrity.

The Project products include harmonized terminology, and harmonized approaches to cancer and non-cancer risk assessment, exposure assessment, and the use of data in place of standard defaults in risk assessment. Harmonization Project documents can be found on the website: <http://www.who.int/ipcs/methods/harmonization/en/index.html>

Key Strategic Directions for 2005-2009

During 2005-2009 the project is undertaking expert activities to harmonize methods hand-in-hand with activities in support of country uptake and use of these methods, including communication, promotion and translation into languages. New activities include both sharp-focus work to address a specific issue in risk assessment (e.g. by preparing a short paper or a workshop report), and production of guidance or reports covering a broader aspect of risk assessment (which may require a longer timeframe or more effort). Activities are drawn from priority areas including cancer, exposure assessment, aggregate/cumulative risk assessment, immunotoxicity, and others. Details of these activities are progressively included on the website as they are implemented.