

Resolution of the Council on Implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)



Meeting of the Environment Policy Committee (EPOC) at Ministerial Level

Environment and Global Competitiveness

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For a better world economy

**RESOLUTION OF THE COUNCIL ON IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STRATEGIC APPROACH
TO INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT (SAICM)
[C(2008)32]**

THE COUNCIL,

Having regard to Article 5a) of the Convention on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development of 14 December 1960 and to Article 18 a) iii) of the Rules of Procedure of the Organisation;

Having regard to the commitments to chemicals management as expressed in the 1992 Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, Agenda 21, the 2000 Bahia Declaration on Chemical Safety of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety and the 2002 Johannesburg Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development and other recent international conventions and decisions related to managing chemicals sustainably;

Having regard to the goals articulated by that World Summit in paragraph 23 of the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, to achieve, by 2020, the use and production of chemicals in ways that lead to the minimisation of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment;

Having regard to the challenges related to reducing the risks of chemicals identified in 2001 in Objective 4 of the OECD Environmental Strategy for the First Decade of the 21st Century, as well as to the 2006 Strategic Vision of the Environment Policy Committee and the proactive outreach strategies of both the OECD Environment Policy Committee and the Chemicals Committee;

Having regard to the commitment by Ministers, Heads of Delegation and representatives of civil society and the private sector to the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) at the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) in Dubai in February 2006, through the adoption of the Dubai Declaration and the Overarching Policy Strategy, and to its implementation, as well as the call to intergovernmental organisations to support this implementation and to consider the development of their own actions plans;

Having regard to the recommendation in the Dubai Declaration to use and further develop the Global Plan of Action as a working tool and guidance document for SAICM;

Recognising the stated needs in that Overarching Policy Strategy, which include ensuring that the tools to generate and apply science-based information on the hazards and risks of chemicals are available for all countries, as well as clear and accessible information on chemicals themselves; enhancing co-operation and coherence to make efficient use of resources at all levels through harmonised approaches and principles; and avoiding duplication of effort by taking due account of the instruments and processes that have been developed to date;

Recognising that OECD Member countries are faced with the same needs and have been working together under the framework of OECD over the past several decades toward meeting these needs by developing and using a large number of internationally recognised standards, tools and approaches for management of the risks of chemicals and pesticides;

Recognising the desirability of working together with certain non-Member Economies to implement many of the objectives of SAICM and of addressing the needs of other non-Member Economies based on the tools, instruments and overall experience developed in OECD in the framework provided by the Organisation;

Recognising the co-ordinating function of the Inter-organisation Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) through which OECD co-operates, avoids duplication of its work on chemicals management with the work of other intergovernmental organisations working in this field and promotes synergies, where possible and appropriate;

Recalling the consideration of SAICM by other intergovernmental organisations, notably United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and International Labour Organization (ILO);

DECIDES THAT THE OECD SHALL:

- Make implementation of the SAICM objectives, as set out in the Overarching Policy Strategy, an integral part of its Chemicals Programme, in particular through work on those elements of the SAICM Global Plan of Action for which OECD is an actor;
- Assist Member countries in their efforts to implement SAICM and work with non-Member Economies in SAICM implementation;
- Continue to co-operate and co-ordinate with other relevant intergovernmental organisations with regard to successful and timely implementation of SAICM;
- Make the outputs of its Chemicals Programme as accessible, relevant and useful as possible to non-Member Economies and other interested stakeholders, distributing them widely and free of charge; and
- Inform each future meeting of the International Conference on Chemicals Management of progress made by OECD in SAICM implementation.

ANNEX I. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON THE OECD COUNCIL RESOLUTION

This document includes the text of the Council Resolution on Implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and, in its Annex II, a background note which explains SAICM and its close relationship to the OECD Chemicals Programme. SAICM, which includes an Overarching Policy Strategy and a Global Plan of Action, was adopted by Ministers, Heads of State and stakeholders at the UN International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) in Dubai in February 2006. ICCM commended SAICM to the attention of the governing bodies of relevant intergovernmental organisations, who were invited to support SAICM with a view to incorporating its objectives into their programmes of work. Since then, SAICM has received consideration and support by the governing bodies of the following intergovernmental organisations: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), World Health Organization (WHO), International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

This Council Resolution expresses support from OECD; it acknowledges the role of OECD in the implementation of the SAICM objectives and calls for the Organisation to be more explicitly involved in supporting capacity building aspects of chemicals management (primarily by dissemination of the products of the Environment Directorate's Environment, Health and Safety Programme and making them more accessible, relevant and useful to OECD non-Members).

The Council Resolution was endorsed by Chemicals Committee and Working Party on Chemicals, Pesticides and Biotechnology at its 41st meeting in June 2007, by the Environment Policy Committee at its meeting on 29-30 November 2007, and adopted by the OECD Council on 28 March 2008.

ANNEX II. BACKGROUND INFORMATION ON SAICM AND THE ROLE OF OECD IN ITS IMPLEMENTATION

For almost four decades, the OECD Chemicals Programme has been developing policies and instruments to assist Member countries to manage the risks of chemicals, providing a harmonised framework which facilitates trade and work sharing, saves resources and avoids duplication.

Chemicals are essential for modern life, and the chemicals industry is a corner-stone of the global economy. The products of the chemicals industry are worth USD 2 245 billion annually, and 75% of global chemicals production still takes place in OECD countries, which have an important responsibility for ensuring that chemicals can be produced, used and disposed of without harming human health or the environment. The harmonised framework for chemicals management in place among OECD countries, which is based on safety testing and assessment and which makes use of a variety of management tools, helps achieve this objective.

Chemicals are regulated in OECD countries through decision-making based on the results of hazard identification and risk assessment. Chemical manufacturers and importers are required to carry out a battery of tests in order to determine how individual chemicals might affect human health and the environment. The test results and expected exposure situations are then evaluated in view of government decision-making on how specific chemicals should be managed in order to control their risks. This science- and rules-based approach is rigorous and comprehensive, but it can be time-consuming and expensive for both governments and industry. Therefore, work is undertaken in OECD to create and maintain a process which guarantees protection of health and environment and addresses transboundary issues associated with chemicals production and use, while avoiding inefficiencies and waste of resources caused by duplicative work and creation of non-tariff barriers to trade.

As is shown in the “Environmental Outlook 2030” the chemicals industry is evolving and is one of the most global industries, with a significant portion of its production now taking place in non-Member Economies, making convergence of the chemicals safety policies of OECD and non-Member Economies vital.

The *OECD Environmental Outlook to 2030* states that production of chemicals in non-OECD countries, particularly Brazil, Russia, India and China, is rapidly increasing and that OECD's share of world production is expected to drop from 75% today to 63% by 2030. In light of this evolution and the cross-boundary nature of the environmental distribution of chemicals as well as of their effects on human health and the environment and the potential effects on trade, global regulatory efficiency has become an important objective of the OECD Chemicals Programme. At the same time, a number of international Conventions which apply to chemicals have been agreed over the last years in the UN, and many OECD countries are currently upgrading their chemicals safety regulations to comply with them.

The role played by the OECD Chemicals Programme in this evolving sector of the global economy is thus to assist Member countries in:

- developing and maintaining high quality scientific and policy instruments for the protection of human health and the environment from the risks of chemicals;
- creating efficiencies in safety testing and assessment of chemicals through the Mutual Acceptance of Data (MAD) system, whereby one study, done according to OECD rules and standards, is accepted by regulatory authorities throughout the world [the yearly savings to OECD governments and industry by avoiding duplicative testing through MAD are estimated to be at least EUR 60 million];
- facilitating work sharing related to the safety assessment of chemicals and chemical products among OECD countries which can best be achieved if comparable methodologies are used;
- harmonising as far as possible notification and registration requirements for chemicals and chemical products in order to ensure that, in a time when tariffs are decreasing, non-tariff barriers will not become the main obstacles to trade;

- working with selected non-Members in order to promote convergence of the chemical safety policies that are being developed in these countries with those of OECD countries, notably in the framework of the multilateral arrangement provided by the MAD Council Acts as set out in the Chemicals Committee's Outreach Strategy.

In light of the globalisation of the chemicals industry and markets, a Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) has been adopted within the UN, which will have an impact on national policies, both in and outside of OECD. Dissemination of OECD instruments and experience will contribute to SAICM implementation and promote global harmonisation of chemicals management along the lines of OECD policies.

SAICM was adopted by Ministers, Heads of State and stakeholders at the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) in Dubai in February 2006. With its Overarching Policy Strategy and its Global Plan of Action, SAICM constitutes an important global framework for managing the risks of chemicals in a harmonised way, which already relies heavily on the achievements of the OECD Chemicals Programme. The Chemicals Committee supports the idea of making its outputs – the body of OECD standards, instruments and experience on chemical safety – available worldwide and in as accessible a form as possible. Member countries consider their work in the framework of the OECD Chemicals Programme to be an important contribution to the implementation of SAICM.

This implementation will require further efforts related to chemicals management in many countries, both in and outside of OECD, and development of new tools to enable countries to begin or continue to do the necessary work with efficiently and effectively. Member countries support the integration of the objectives of SAICM into the programme of work of the OECD Chemicals Programme because their work in OECD will continue to help them avoid duplication and potential non tariff trade barriers, save resources, reduce animal testing and limit time to market of products as non-Members develop their chemical safety policy frameworks. The role of OECD in implementing SAICM will be concentrated on the development, implementation and broad distribution of its chemicals management tools.

The Chemicals Committee proposes that Member countries work together in the framework provided by OECD to support the objectives of SAICM and to implement SAICM by improving the accessibility to and usefulness of the policies and instruments developed by the Chemicals Programme for non-Members.

The Chemicals Committee in February 2007 endorsed a Statement supporting SAICM (see http://www.oecd.org/document/52/0,2340,en_2649_34365_37999156_1_1_1_1,00.html) which refers to its Outreach Strategy as a means for engaging with selected individual non-Members either in the context of their adherence to the MAD Council Acts or in regard to specific activities and expresses its support for making its outputs available and useful to non-Member Economies which are developing their own chemicals management frameworks. It also agreed to better incorporate SAICM objectives in its next programme of work.¹

This support does not suggest that OECD should provide capacity building to non-Members. The latter is rather the task of other intergovernmental organisations; but it is efficient and effective for these organisations to use the products of the OECD Chemicals Programme in this context. Co-ordination between OECD and the other intergovernmental organisations dealing with chemicals is done effectively through the Inter-Organization programme for the sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC).²

The Chemicals Committee and the Environment Policy Committee have recommended that OECD respond to the call of Ministers and Heads of State when they adopted SAICM for intergovernmental organisations to support its implementation and to consider the development of their own action plans.

¹. The current programme of work of the Special Programme on the Control of Chemicals ends 31 December 2008. The proposal for the 2009-2012 Chemicals Programme will be presented to Council in early 2008.

². IOMC was established in 1995 through a Memorandum of Understanding among the Participating Organisations: OECD, WHO, ILO, UNEP, UNIDO, FAO and UNITAR. The World Bank and UNDP are observers.

The ICCM in its resolution I/1 on implementation arrangements "commended SAICM to the attention of the governing bodies of relevant intergovernmental organisations and encouraged them to endorse or otherwise appropriately acknowledge the SAICM with a view to incorporating its objectives into their programmes of work within their mandates and to report thereon to the ICCM." Since then, SAICM has received consideration and support by the governing bodies of the following intergovernmental organisations: United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), World Health Organization (WHO), International Labour Organization (ILO) and United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO).

EPOC in planning for the 2008 Meeting of OECD Environment Ministers agreed that a text should be developed for consideration by Environment Ministers, which would appropriately acknowledge SAICM. After consultation with the Legal Directorate, it seems that the most appropriate form for such a text would be a Council Resolution on the role of OECD in SAICM implementation. This Council Resolution reaffirms the commitment of OECD to implementing SAICM and recognise that OECD is an effective and efficient forum in which governments can co-operate to make the outcome of their combined efforts larger than the sum of their individual contributions. This adds value to the commitments made in Dubai and set the stage for the OECD Council Resolution related to the Chemicals Programme.

A Council Resolution is an internal Decision (i.e. Act with obligatory force) concerning the continuing work of the Organisation.

A brief explanation of what each of the operative points in the Resolution mean in practice follows.

- *OECD shall make implementation of the SAICM objectives, as set out in the Overarching Policy Strategy, an integral part of its Chemicals Programme, in particular through work on those elements of the SAICM Global Plan of Action for which OECD is an actor.*

The Council Resolution is a major step in explicit recognition of the implementation of SAICM objectives being a goal of OECD work.

The Chemicals Committee at its June 2007 meeting agreed to an outline for the next programme of work on Environment, Health and Safety (EHS), of which the Chemicals Programme is the major component. This programme of work will reflect the objectives of SAICM as described in the Overarching Policy Strategy. At this time the outline is based only on the activities currently undertaken under the eight EHS work areas which deal with chemicals management. This outline will be used as the basis for the development of the next programme of work on chemicals, the specific content of which will, of course, depend on priorities and resources allocated by Member countries. The work programme would be developed around the four relevant SAICM objectives:

- Risk reduction outputs: sharing experience on policies and tools to assist countries to manage and reduce the risks of chemicals [activities in current programme concern, e.g., risk management tools and experiences, sustainable chemistry, pesticide risk reduction, chemical accidents]
- Knowledge and information outputs: providing information, methods, and other tools for testing and assessing chemicals; providing frameworks for work sharing and generating information on the hazards and risks of chemicals [activities in current programme concern, e.g., biocides, new and existing chemicals, (Quantitative) Structure-Activity Relationships project, hazard and exposure assessment methods, Pollutant Releases and Transfer Registers, Hazard Classification and Labelling, testing and assessment of nanomaterials, templates, pesticide registration work sharing]
- Governance outputs: assisting countries to implement systems and agreements set out in OECD Council Acts [activities in current programme concern, e.g., Mutual Acceptance of Data (MAD) instruments (Good Laboratory Practice (GLP) Principles and Test Guidelines, including toxicogenomics, endocrine disrupters, non-animal methods)]
- Capacity-building outputs: disseminating OECD products and making them more accessible, relevant and useful for Members and non-Members [activities in current programme concern, e.g., MAD and non-Members, e-ChemPortal for safety data, food safety co-operation; dissemination of products of all EHS work areas]

- *OECD shall assist Member countries in their efforts to implement SAICM and work with non-Member Economies in SAICM implementation.*

By providing a forum for information exchange among Member countries about their national SAICM implementation plans at the Chemicals Committee, duplication can be avoided and experiences in working with non-Members on chemicals management can be shared.

The implementation of SAICM has been organised in the UN by regions. One of these is the EU/JUSSCANNZ region, which comprises all OECD Member countries and the eight non-OECD EU Members.

- *OECD shall continue to co-operate and co-ordinate with other relevant intergovernmental organisations with regard to successful and timely implementation of SAICM.*

OECD is one of the nine intergovernmental organisations which make up the Inter-Organisation Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, which initiates, facilitates and co-ordinates international action to achieve the WSSD 2020 goal for sound management of chemicals. The other participating organisations are the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the International Labour Organization (ILO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the World Health Organization (WHO). The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the World Bank take part as observers (see <http://www.who.int/iomc/en/>).

- *OECD shall make the outputs of its Chemicals Programme as accessible, relevant and useful as possible to non-Member Economies and other interested stakeholders, distributing them widely and free of charge.*

The Chemicals Programme produces a large number of policies and instruments related to testing, assessment and management of chemicals and chemical products. The most important of the policies are the Council Decisions which lay the foundation and provide the international standards (Test Guidelines, Principles of Good Laboratory Practice, and Procedures for GLP compliance monitoring) for the multilateral agreement on the mutual acceptance of safety data for the assessment of chemicals. A 1997 Decision allows for non-Member adherence to these Acts, and the Outreach Strategy of the Chemicals Committee emphasises work with those individual non-Members which aspire to adhere to the MAD system. This work, which continues to expand as more and more non-Members see the benefits of adherence, is undertaken in the context of the activities related to Test Guidelines and GLP, which are major components of the Chemicals Programme.³ All of the standards, including now the Test Guidelines themselves, and materials produced by the Environment, Health and Safety area, including those supporting all the other activities, are available for downloading on the public website.

The Chemicals Committee has proposed that efforts be made to make these materials more accessible and useful to the needs of non-Members. It is expected that this aspect of SAICM implementation will be covered in the 2009-2010 work programme, as far as resources are available.

- *OECD shall inform each future meeting of the International Conference on Chemicals Management of progress made by OECD in SAICM implementation.*

The adoption of the Resolution by the OECD Council will indeed be brought to the attention of the next ICCM, to be held in Geneva in 2009. OECD will also continue to report to ICCM on its activities to implement SAICM, either directly or through IOMC.

³ Three non-Member Economies are currently full adherents to the MAD system: South Africa, Slovenia and Israel. India, Singapore, Brazil and Argentina are currently provisional adherents, and China, Thailand and Malaysia are expected to join the system soon.