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INTERIM CHEMICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

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NEW INFORMATION AVAILABLE AT INTERNATIONAL LEVEL,
RELEVANT TO EXISTING DECISION GUIDANCE DOCUMENTS

Note by the secretariat

1. The Secretariat has the honour to forward the attached note from the chair of the Interim Chemical Review Committee to the Committee.

NOTE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE INTERIM CHEMICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

How to ensure, that as new information relevant to existing Decision Guidance Documents (DGDs) becomes available at the international level, it is brought to the attention of DNAs

Background

The Interim Chemical Review Committee at its first session (ICRC-1) identified a range of issues for further consideration. One topic was the need “*To develop guidance on collecting additional information (international assessments) – format, content, resources, delivery of information*” (paragraph 47 of UNEP/FAO/PIC/ICRC.1/6).

To a certain extent effective discussion of this topic within the ICRC will depend on the outcome of the work of task groups 1 and 3 established at ICRC-1. These two groups were to look at notifications of control actions as the basis for developing the content, level of detail and format of decision guidance documents (DGDs). It should be kept in mind that the information contained in a DGD is based on the regulatory control actions reported by countries and the supporting information they provide in accordance with Annex I and II of the Rotterdam Convention. Supplementary information may be available and included in the DGD as a result of the activities of international or intergovernmental organisations e.g. WHO/IARC/IPCS/ILO/OECD. As the work programs of these different groups are ongoing there will be situations where information on specific chemicals will only be available after a DGD has been finalised.

It is important to clearly distinguish between updating DGDs and making additional “relevant” information available to designated national authorities (DNAs). As part of the process for the entry of a chemical into the PIC procedure the DGD must be approved by consensus at the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee/Conference of Parties (INC/COP). The process for drafting DGDs developed at the first session of the ICRC was adopted by the INC at its seventh session, any “up-dates” of a DGD would need to follow the same process. As a result of the complexity of this process and due to the fact that new information or additional assessments of chemicals subject to the PIC procedure may become available at any time consideration is needed as to how to make such information available to DNAs in a timely manner.

Points to Consider

1. *What characterises an acceptable international document considered acceptable for listing/reference in a DGD?*

- intended to include: risk evaluations/assessments; basic health and safety information and/or information on risk management options
- the documents should be as comprehensive as possible and be developed through a peer review process by a recognised “independent” expert group
- the documents should be publicly available
- where relevant, the documents should clearly identify the information/data considered in its development and be presented in sufficient detail to allow an understanding of the basis for the risk/hazard evaluation

2. *What sources of these international documents for specific chemicals or groups of chemicals exist?*

An initial list would include but not be limited to documents produced by the:

- FAO/WHO Joint Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR)
- International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC)
- Environmental Health Criteria (EHC) Documents; Concise International Chemical Assessment Documents (CICADs) and International Chemical Safety Cards prepared by the International Program on Chemical Safety (IPCS)

- Safety Data Sheets developed in line with internationally recognised formats
- Screening Information Assessment Reports (SIARS) produced under OECDs Screening Information Data Sets (SIDs) project for High Production Volume (HPV) chemicals

3. *Options for making this information known/available to countries.*

To be successful efforts should as far as possible build on existing information exchange processes

- the availability of a new information for a chemical subject to the PIC procedure could be referenced in the PIC Circular along with the contact address for obtaining copies of a particular document
- the availability of new information could be noted on the Rotterdam Convention website along with information on how it might be obtained and/or an electronic link to the relevant website where the information might be found¹. For example:

Inventory of Critical Reviews of Chemicals: Since 1995 UNEP Chemicals and the European Centre for Ecotoxicology and Toxicology of Chemicals (ECETOC) have worked together to create this inventory which identifies those chemicals that have been subject to an internationally recognized critical review of their health and environmental data. The purpose of the inventory is to inform potential producers or users of the critical reviews, of the work that has been undertaken and to indicate the scope and manner of the preparation of existing reviews.

Global Information Network on Chemicals (GINC): This network was established in 1995 by the National Institute of Health Sciences (NIHS Japan) as a world wide information network on the safe use of chemicals. It is designed to link different individual projects (at both national and international level) and to facilitate dialogue and information exchange thus promoting a global information network for sound chemicals management.

Information on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs): At present a number of the chemicals subject to the PIC procedure have also been identified as POPs. UNEP chemicals has established a POPs information clearing house which includes an inventory data base containing references to major sources of toxicological and regulatory information from different countries, a data base of alternatives as well as other information.

- In many instances these documents should already be available through national contact points established to meet the needs of other chemical related activities. A comprehensive listing of national contact points concerned with chemicals' management could be made available to PIC DNAs to facilitate their access to the relevant documents and additional information sources. For example:

The Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) was established in 1994 to assist governments in meeting their obligations arising from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in 1992 (UNCED). The work of the IFCS is supported by 5 vice chairs, responsible for co-ordinating regional perspectives and a network of national focal points. The activities of the IFCS include facilitating access to information on chemicals including specifically Program Area A “*Expanding and Accelerating International Assessment of Chemicals*” and Program Area C “*Information Exchange on Toxic Chemicals and Chemical Risks*”.

¹ Reference might also be made to the UNEP Internet Guide, a guide on the ways and means of obtaining information from the Internet. The guide is designed for those with a limited knowledge of computers and the Internet. It guides the reader to information sources on many aspects of chemicals.

Contact or focal points have also been established by the Codex Alimentarius, the IPCS, and for Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) related to the UNEP sponsored Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee etc.
