
Twenty-first Meeting of the UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme Advisory Group (PAG-21)

Meeting Report

8 December 2015

Geneva, Switzerland

1. Welcome and Overview of Meeting Agenda

Jorge Ocaña (UNITAR) opened the twenty-first meeting of the Programme Advisory Group (PAG) for the UNITAR/ILO Global GHS Capacity Building Programme at 2.30 p.m. on 8 December 2015. He reminded participants of the importance of the GHS as one of the cornerstones of sound management of chemicals, and thanked the PAG members for their generous contributions.

Thirteen participants were present, representing governments, industry and UNITAR.

2. Development of GHS guidance, training, and resource materials

2.1 GHS e-Learning course – results of the fourth edition

Fabrice Clavien (UNITAR) presented the main results of the fourth edition of the UNITAR e-Learning course on the GHS, which was held from 20 April to 28 June 2015. The course had 17 participants (ten men, seven women), with most participants coming from the private sector (65%), but also from governments, one from an international organisation and one from a non-governmental organisation (NGO). Participants came from: the United States (29%); Canada (12%); Colombia (6%); France (6%); Germany (6%); Mauritius (6%); Nepal (6%); Portugal (6%); South Africa (17%); and the United Kingdom (6%). Fifteen participants (88% of the class) completed the course successfully.

The course survey highlighted a high level of relevance and satisfaction among participants, with 94 per cent planning to recommend the course to their colleagues.

2.2 GHS e-Learning course – current status of the fifth edition

The status of the ongoing edition of the course was then presented by UNITAR. It started on 12 October 2015 and would close on 20 December 2015. Fourteen participants registered (eight male, six female), coming mostly from Mexico and the United States (22% each), but also from Argentina (7%), Colombia (7%), the Democratic Republic of Congo (7%), Ethiopia (7%), Germany (7%), Mauritius (7%), Sweden (7%), and Switzerland (7%). Most of them are working in the private sector (50%), but also for governments (15%), the United Nations (7%), international organisations (7%), and academia (7%). Thirteen of them were on track with the course requirements at the time of the meeting, and the average score was about 95%¹.

2.3 GHS e-Learning course – plans for 2016

UNITAR presented the initial plan for 2016 regarding the e-Learning courses on the GHS. The main task is to finish updating the course to Revision 6 of the Purple Book, but also to improve the marketing of the course, as participation has been quite low in the last two editions. UNITAR also plans to increase further the interactive nature of the course (e.g. development of videos, such as tutorials). If resources allow, UNITAR would like to translate the course into Spanish, as there has been strong demand from Spanish-speaking countries/nationals. Translation into French and Chinese could also be envisaged, if demand and resources are secured.

Another idea discussed at the meeting was to develop an online course on GHS basics to be offered for free as a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) (with certificates of completion

¹ This number is not necessarily comprehensive, as it simply adds up the tests undertaken and disregards the ones missed, as well as the completion status of the discussion forums

being provided for a small fee), which would target a larger and less technical audience, such as representatives of civil society (e.g. associations representing consumers or farmers), decision-makers, chemical companies' managers, and undergraduate chemistry students. The idea would be to use the Basic GHS course that was developed for UNITAR workshops, which was revised by the PAG. Such a course would be designed to be managed automatically by a course software (i.e. without tutors). This would widen the reach and impact of UNITAR's capacity building materials that are already available and increase awareness on the GHS, which would help UNITAR/ILO to fulfil their mandates. Members of the PAG expressed their interest in the idea but with some reservation regarding the definition of the target audience, which needs to be clearly defined. The current UNITAR Basic course on the GHS would also need some revision.

UNITAR also highlighted its plan to link further its online training tools/materials with its capacity building projects on the GHS. Online materials could be used in projects to prepare face-to-face trainings (using the train-the-trainer approach), which would then be tailored to the specific, practical issues met in implementing the GHS. On the other hand, the materials and trainings developed in the projects could be made electronic, so as to make it available for other interested audiences as well, thus increasing the impact of UNITAR/ILO's interventions.

2.4 Guidance documents – plans for 2016

UNITAR then discussed the plan to update its two main guidance documents on the GHS, hopefully during 2016 (e.g. updating to Rev.6 of the GHS Purple Book), namely the "Companion Guide to the Purple Book" (2012 edition) and the "Guidance Document to Support the Implementation of the GHS" (2010 edition). The Companion Guide is based on materials previously developed by United States (US) Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), and the Guidance Document also needs to reflect the GHS updates.

When discussing funding for these updates, the United States (Occupational Safety and Health Administration, OSHA) invited UNITAR to communicate with them in 2016 to investigate possibilities.

2.5 Brainstorming possible areas of development

Health Canada mentioned some activities that have been done in the country, such as the adoption of the GHS Rev.5 in national regulations on February 11, 2015 (to be fully implemented by June 2017 for suppliers, June 2018 for distributors and December 2018 for employers). A thorough guidance document (500 to 600 pages) is being developed for suppliers to understand how to comply with the regulatory requirements of the Hazardous Products Act and Hazardous Products Regulations with respect to safety data sheets (SDSs) and labels. Canada is working in close collaboration with US colleagues in helping to comply with their respective jurisdictional requirements. This document will be scientifically credible but specific to Canada and focusing on suppliers. Additional tools would be developed as well to support the transition period to implement the GHS (Rev.5) in Canada. These guidance documents will be available in both English and French. The Canadian Government owns the copyright but they will be available to the public (though not published on the internet). Health Canada was invited to circulate the documents as soon as they become available.

Similar guidance documents have been developed in the European Union to apply the GHS (e.g. classification and labelling); a basic guide (similar to UNITAR's Companion Guide) and an advocacy guide (about 500 pages).

These guidance documents would provide useful resources for UNITAR when it updates its own documents.

3. Update of the GHS Roster of Experts

The presentation of the UNITAR Roster of Experts for GHS capacity building triggered a thorough discussion, which highlighted the need to update the Roster and to establish solid criteria to guarantee its relevance and quality/usefulness. So far, the Roster has been developed based on self-nomination, without any form of peer-review. However, such a Roster could be a very useful tool for UNITAR/ILO capacity building activities as well as for the countries.

4. Capacity development at the national level

4.1 UNITAR update on activities of national GHS projects

UNITAR then gave a brief update of its ongoing national GHS projects, supported by the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) Quick Start Programme Trust Fund (QSPTF). Projects in Bolivia, Colombia, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Guatemala, Mexico, Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan continued during 2015.

- **Bolivia:** A GHS Training Workshop took place in June 2015. A final workshop is to be organised;
- **Colombia:** A new Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) is being processed to resume activities;
- **DRC:** Activities have been completed. The project will close as soon as the last outputs are collected;
- **Guatemala:** The National Coordination Team is working in close cooperation with the Ministry of Education to include the GHS into the national curricula for primary schools. Awareness-raising materials have been developed and an animated video is about to be produced for this purpose;
- **Mexico:** A final workshop took place in August 2015, where the final draft of the National GHS Implementation Strategy was presented and finalised;
- **Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan:** Both completed all their activities, and a final independent monitoring and evaluation was carried out, which highlighted the success of the projects. All project objectives have been met, and the introduction of the GHS into the national legislation is under way.

4.2 UNITAR update on activities of national projects with a GHS component

In addition to the projects presented above, UNITAR is currently serving as the international executing agency for three broader QSPTF-supported projects in Burundi, Haiti, and Tunisia, with a GHS-related component (i.e. preparation of national GHS situation and gap analyses, and support for GHS capacity building, to help develop a national GHS implementation strategy and national policies for sound management of chemicals). The projects are based on cross-ministry coordination as well as on stakeholders' involvement.

- **Burundi:** The country is setting up the project coordination committee;
- **Haiti and Tunisia:** Both are starting to prepare the GHS situation and gap analyses.

In addition, UNITAR briefly mentioned three QSP projects awaiting funding and initiation; in the Democratic People's republic of Korea, Mongolia and Guinea.

UNITAR also presented some strategies for new projects. These are:

- Improving fundraising;
- Increasing synergies (e.g. with nanosafety);
- Targeting specific regions (e.g. the Southern African Development Community, SADC);
- Delivering tailor-made activities and packages (e.g. specific trainings to industry/government groups).

The question was raised on how to link the GHS projects with nanosafety issues; UNITAR noted that this was an area of specific interest during the 2015 nanosafety regional workshops, and welcomes ideas on beginning this work. This follows discussions that take place on nanomaterials within the ECOSOC Sub-Committee of Experts on the GHS.

5. Supporting activities and services for GHS capacity development

5.1 Presentation of the online GHS scheme of the IOMC Toolbox

A presentation was then given by Brandon Turner (UNITAR) via teleconference on the IOMC Toolbox. It is a free and internet-based toolbox that enables countries to identify the most relevant and efficient national chemicals management actions, according to the resources available. At each implementation step, the Toolbox presents the relevant IOMC resources, such as guidance documents. As such, it is more than a search engine for documents: it provides specific direction to documents given a users' particular situation. The new version of the IOMC Toolbox provides a set of interactive features allowing governments to use it as a platform for collaboration among ministries, agencies and other stakeholders, such as industry. Users can save their information, add comments, and share and discuss issues with colleagues and partners.

The GHS scheme is now available online and open for feedback. Comments from the various institutions/experts involved in the previous review (including the PAG) have all been addressed.

Countries are encouraged to use the Toolbox as an implementation tool.

5.2 Feedback from the PAG peer-review

The PAG was invited to review the online version and provide comments prior to the meeting. The comments received so far highlighted the Toolbox as a useful resource, flexible and versatile, yet presenting some bugs and navigation challenges which could be addressed to become more user-friendly. References to the GHS should be updated to indicate Rev.6. Also, the links given to the UNITAR Guidance Document (on implementing the GHS) should be limited to the few chapters/sections that are relevant. It was suggested to provide links to a few countries' regulations.

6. AOB

No other business was raised.

7. Conclusion and closure

PAG members expressed their appreciation for the presentations and updates, and UNITAR thanked the PAG for the valuable feedback and discussions. The meeting closed at 4 p.m.

Annex 1: Meeting Agenda

Twenty-first Meeting of the UNITAR/ILO GHS Capacity Building Programme Advisory Group (PAG)

8 December 2015, 2.30 p.m. – 4 p.m.
Inn Room, International Environment House 2
Geneva

Meeting Agenda

- 1. Welcome and overview of agenda** (5 min)
- 2. Development of GHS guidance, training, and resource materials** (20 min)
 - 2.1 GHS e-Learning course – results of the fourth edition
 - 2.2 GHS e-Learning course – current status of the fifth edition
 - 2.3 GHS e-Learning course – plans for 2016
 - 2.4 Guidance documents – plans for 2016
 - 2.5 Brainstorming on possible areas of development
- 3. Update of the GHS Roster of Experts** (5 min)
- 4. Capacity development at the national level** (15 min)
 - 4.1 UNITAR update on activities of national GHS projects
 - 4.2 UNITAR update on activities of national projects with a GHS component
- 5. Supporting activities and services for GHS capacity development** (35 min)
 - 5.1 Presentation of the online GHS scheme of the IOMC Toolbox
 - 5.2 Feedback from the PAG peer-review
- 6. AOB** (5 min)
- 7. Conclusion and closure** (5 min)

Annex 2: Meeting Documents

No.	Title
PAG 21-1	Meeting Agenda
PAG 21-2	Preliminary list of participants
PAG 21-3	GHS e-Learning Course - Evaluation Report (April - June 2015)
PAG 21-4	GHS e-Learning Course Syllabus (October – December 2015)
PAG 21-5	Companion Guide to the Purple Book (2012 edition)
PAG 21-6	Guidance Document to Support Implementation of the GHS (2010 edition)
PAG 21-7	Roster of Experts for GHS Capacity Building
PAG 21-8	GHS Scheme Map of the IOMC Toolbox
PAG 21-9	UNITAR presentation
PAG 21-10	Report of the 21 th PAG Meeting

Annex 3: List of Participants

	Name	Organisation	Email
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