

Global Partnership to Implement the GHS

Teleconference – 15 December 2020, 2pm - 4 pm (CET)

Summary Report (of 29 January 2021)

1. Welcome

ILO, OECD and UNITAR opened the teleconference and welcomed participants, with all introducing themselves. Twenty-five participants joined the call, representing a range of sectors and stakeholders. See annex 1 for the list of participants.

The agenda was adopted as proposed (annex II). Moderating responsibilities were shared among OECD, ILO and UNITAR, the three founding partners of the Global GHS Partnership.

2. Priority workstreams of the Partnership

UNITAR introduced a session providing an update on recent activities, in relation to the agreed workstreams.

Study on GHS implementation and regional trade agreements

The study is undertaken by the University of Gothenburg and supported by KemI. Ms. Jessica Coria (lead academic and author) introduced the research, noting that only two trade agreements (in force from July 2020 or beforehand) had yielded references to the GHS; the EU-Japan trade deal and the Canada, Mexico, USA trade deal. A question was raised if the research could identify practical measures and generate points of contact relevant for exploring engagement of secretariats of regional trade agreements in the Partnership. The report is due to be finalized and published in early 2021.

Key elements of a national GHS roadmap

UNITAR introduced the work on the key elements and thanked participants for their input on the work. The document is now finalized, integrating all feedback. This is now available on the [UNITAR webpage](#) and serves as suggested elements of a national GHS roadmap to implementation, allowing for the process to be broken down into different steps, maybe with differing support at relevant points.

Overview of GHS activities (including training, activities that support/enhance implementation [e.g. workshops], guidance, and capacity building undertaken by organizations and entities outside of the work done by UNITAR, ILO, and OECD.)

UNITAR introduced the work on the overview of GHS activities and thanked participants for their input on the activities. The document is now [finalized](#), integrating all feedback. Given the nature of GHS activities and the reality that they will be ever-evolving, this document in particular can be updated in the future.

GHS capacity development: Lessons-learned study

UNITAR introduced the efforts being undertaken to study lessons-learned from around the world. Two independent consultants (Ms. Alejandra Acosta, focusing on the Latin American and Caribbean region, and Mr. Jonathan Krueger, focusing on other regions) presented their work to date. Some discussions with relevant stakeholders had taken place already, but would likely continue in December 2020 and into January 2021. Initial lessons-learned include the need for political support, collaboration from local and global industry partners, training on an ongoing basis, and consideration of international drivers, such as trade agreements or OECD accession. The report will be drafted and possibly disseminated through webinars in the first quarter of 2021.

GHS legislation and standards guidance

UNITAR introduced the latest status of this work, thanking participants for their support. Furthermore, several members of the Sub-Committee of Experts on the GHS had provided input, and the independent consultant felt that significant progress was being made. The draft report is likely to be available in January/February 2021.

Mapping of International Labour standards

ILO introduced efforts underway to map International Labour Standards that are already implemented around the world, and could thus serve to support implementation of the GHS including legal and policy aspects. To be available March/April 2021.

3. International GHS targets and results framework of the Partnership

OECD introduced a session on the development of targets, noting that the Beyond 2020 virtual working group 1 was discussing the inclusion of a draft target that is focused specifically on the GHS. Participants noted the broad support for the target, though also noted some stakeholders were not necessarily supportive of including a GHS-specific target. The proposed text in the VWG was:

“By 2030, all governments have legally implemented and enforce the United Nations Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) in all relevant sectors.”

Given the potential for the GHS to be specified within a Beyond 2020 target, with subsequent milestones likely attached, the participants felt there was no need to develop a parallel process to establish a target for the Partnership. A short discussion on potential milestones took place; while “universal” adoption of the GHS seems to be well-regarded as a target level of achievement, it was felt to be premature to propose milestones for the coming years within the Partnership.

UNITAR, noting that the level of GHS implementation through legislation is almost certain to be an indicator included in the Beyond 2020 framework, the representative presented efforts underway with ILO and UNECE to enhance coordination of efforts to track implementation status and ensure the coordination between the IOMC (with ILO and UNITAR) indicator and the UNECE webpage/table of implementation.

4. Activities up to ICCM5 and lead/supporting organizations

ILO introduced a session to consider some of the activities to ICCM5 and what, if any, announcements the Partnership and stakeholders may wish to make.

Participants were broadly supportive of a high-level event to be held at ICCM5. In terms of planning for such an event and other outreach during 2021, ILO, OECD and UNITAR announced their intention to work with partners in developing a strategy for the Partnership and would develop this in early 2021. Part of this would also include outreach to existing and potential donors to identify potential resources that could support implementation.

ILO introduced the development of a short survey (with input from Mr. Achim Halpaap, UNITAR senior expert) to obtain a better understanding of country interest and commitment. It addresses countries' status in developing legislation, where countries are in terms of firm plans to implement the GHS, steps they have already taken, as well as the commitment and resource needs they may have. The intention is to send this round in early 2021 to relevant contact lists and develop a list of countries to engage with, both that may wish to share lessons and good practices, and those that may seek support for implementation.

In reference to resources, the participant from the European Union mentioned the Green New Deal and the commitment within that to further the EU's international cooperation on chemicals and waste management, with particular reference to the promotion of the GHS. He mentioned that support would be most likely through bilateral relationships, so governments discussing with EU diplomatic missions in-country will be important.

5. Outreach to potential partners

UNITAR provided an update on discussions with the WTO secretariat, to find opportunities to strengthen the message about the links between trade and the GHS. He updated participants on the opportunity to present information to a WTO Technical Barriers to Trade committee for their meeting on 23 - 26 February 2021, suggesting written information as it is an online event. This could focus on recent activities of the Partnership and plans for 2021. Another opportunity would be a WTO Technical Barriers to Trade committee meeting on 1 – 4 June 2021, which may have more of an in-person component. This could provide an opportunity to arrange a side event, introduce the work of the Partnership, especially with plans likely to be further along for ICCM5, and present the research on trade agreements and the GHS.

UNITAR will continue to liaise with the WTO secretariat and government representatives as Member States of the WTO, as well as OECD and UNECE as observers to the WTO to put in place relevant plans. These will be communicated with participants, to ensure elements of trade and the GHS are included.

6. Any other business and Next steps

A discussion on potential (enhanced) engagement with the agricultural sector and pesticides regulators was postponed to a subsequent meeting.

The meeting closed with a plan to meet again in 2021 and continue planning up to ICCM5.

Annex I

GHS - partnership - teleconference

Dec 2020 - list of participants

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Annex II

Global Partnership to Implement the GHS

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Agenda

1. Welcome
 - Welcome
 - Introduction of participants
2. Priority workstreams of the Partnership
 - Key elements of a national GHS roadmap
 - Overview of GHS activities
 - GHS capacity development: Lessons-learned study
 - GHS legislation and standards guidance
 - Study on GHS implementation and regional trade agreements
 - Any other workstreams that stakeholders would like to provide updates on
3. International GHS targets and results framework of the Partnership
 - Current status of the Beyond 2020 virtual working groups with relation to a GHS-specific target and the GHS as an indicator
 - Discussion on anticipated results framework of the partnership
 - If Beyond 2020 establishes a GHS-specific target?
 - If Beyond 2020 does not establish a GHS-specific target?
4. Activities up to ICCM5 and lead/supporting organizations
 - High-level event at ICCM5? Donor support? Major announcements?
 - Development of a GHS Partnership Strategy
 - Identification of target partner countries to implement the GHS
 - Opportunities to engage further with the agriculture sector and pesticides regulators
5. Outreach to potential partners
 - Discussions with WTO and opportunities to showcase the GHS and the Partnership
6. Any other business
7. Next steps