

Global Partnership to Implement the GHS

Teleconference – 30 September 2021, 1330-1530 (CEST)

Summary report (as of 12 November 2021)

1. Welcome

ILO, OECD and UNITAR opened the teleconference and welcomed participants, with all introducing themselves. Sixteen 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. Activities supporting the work of the Partnership

Participants in the meeting were invited to introduce recent work on topics related to the GHS.

The representative of ILO introduced the recent published document: The GHS in the world of work: Mapping synergies between ILO Instruments and the GHS. The report explores critical synergies between the GHS and the ILO's instruments on chemicals and occupational safety and health, with an aim to further promote GHS implementation and an even greater engagement of the world of work in global efforts toward the safer management of chemicals. It is available at:

https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/labour-administration-inspection/resources-library/publications/WCMS_818521/lang--en/index.htm

The representative of UNITAR presented a few key lessons and outcomes from the lessons-learned study, which had also been shared on a webinar for the Latin American region, a University of Cape Town discussion network meeting, and as part of the KemI ITP (see below) to assist with outreach. He also presented the latest status of the legislation guidance, noting that those stakeholders who supported the work had no further comments and the document had thus gone for formatting. It is to be published shortly. Both documents will be available at: <https://unitar.org/global-partnership-implement-ghs>.

The representative of FAO (from the Rotterdam Convention Secretariat), on behalf of a colleague, presented some of the primary updates to the 2021 FAO/WHO Labelling guidance, which is to be published during 2021. The update enhances the significance of the GHS within the guidance. Furthermore, the GHS has been gaining attention among Rotterdam Convention stakeholders (considering the GHS in relation to the information exchange mechanism and the PIC procedure) and this could represent an interesting area of work. UNITAR has previously noted that some resources are available to take this topic further, liaising with FAO, the Rotterdam Convention Secretariat, and other stakeholders as appropriate.

The representative of Kemi referenced the International Training Programme (ITP) thematic module work on the GHS that had taken place in the preceding weeks. Kenya, Tanzania, South Africa, Uganda and Zambia took part in the programme, which focused on the current status of legislation, the problems stemming from the current level of implementation, and what next steps may be to enhance implementation and enforcement. Follow-up with these countries will take place in the next 3 – 6 months. UNITAR contributed to the training to provide updates from the recently-developed documents and advice, where relevant.

The representative of CEFIC, on behalf of other colleagues, introduced a paper entitled “ICCA Recommendations on Modernization of The World Trade Organization”. The paper was presented to the WTO in the week of 27 September 2021, and any subsequent steps will be communicated to the Partnership group. The GHS is noted specifically in one of the four “chemical regulatory cooperation areas” that are offered. It was noted by participants that this further emphasises previous comments and activities in relation to trade and the GHS.

3. Update on proposed implementation activities

The representative of the SAICM secretariat introduced a current proposal in development, under the framework agreement between the EU and UNEP. The project, with co-funding from CEFIC, and supported by ECHA, will work with 4 countries (proposed as Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria) to implement the GHS in legislation and develop capacities. The intention is to work with the countries over a long enough timeframe to ensure success, and inform future activities of a similar nature. UNITAR has also supported the development of the proposal, and other stakeholders will be brought in, as appropriate.

4. International GHS targets and links to the Partnership

The representative of the SAICM secretariat gave a brief update on the Beyond 2020 intersessional process, given the potential significance of the proposed GHS-specific target and the GHS as an indicator.

A short discussion ensued, and participants reaffirmed the importance of having a target on the GHS within the Beyond 2020 framework. Participants also encouraged outreach to those that had thus far not supported the GHS-specific target to understand their concerns and if they can be alleviated. If such a target can not be agreed to, the Global Partnership could take the opportunity to establish its own ambition level and target. The Partnership was also encouraged to consider how it could support legally-binding parts of the Beyond 2020 framework, even if the framework as a whole will not be (legally-binding).

5. Outreach

The representative of UNITAR presented some updates:

- Through the OECD, as an observer, a Partnership update was provided to the WTO Committee on Technical Barriers to Trade meeting (24-26 February 2021), including background of the GHS, work that had been done under the Partnership and highlighting the Kemi-funded study on GHS in trade agreements.

- The World Future Council had indicated that it is looking into opportunities to showcase the work of the Kyrgyz Republic (as a winner of the Future Policy Award at the Berlin Forum), as a case study for the region and subsequent regional work. As and when UNITAR receives information on this, they will update the group
- A survey to understand GHS implementation needs and readiness from countries is available (and translated by ILO into French and Spanish) to send round to relevant networks. UNITAR requested suggestions for contact lists. Participants offered: the UCT chemicals and pesticide discussion networks, the WHO health network and the Kemi ITP contact list. UNITAR plans to send the survey out by the end of 2021.

6. Open floor to hear from partners / brainstorm on suggested GHS Partnership activities and strategy

One participant suggested a high-level meeting or segment on the GHS. The lead agencies of the Global Partnership will discuss this and consider its feasibility.

As per the comment under agenda item 4 (re. legally-binding parts of the Beyond 2020 framework), the Partnership co-leads suggested to have a more detailed discussion on this in subsequent meetings/teleconferences.

7. Next Steps

Members of the Partnership thanked all participants joining the meeting and for their efforts in promoting the GHS. A next meeting will be organised in the first half of 2022 for further updates and planning.

Annex I

GHS - partnership - teleconference September 2021

list of participants

	First Name	Surname	Agency/Institution	Email
1	Alexandros	KIRIAZIS	EU	Alexandros.KIRIAZIS@ec.europa.eu
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Annex II

Global Partnership to Implement the GHS

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Agenda

1. Welcome
 - Welcome
 - Introduction of participants
2. Activities supporting the work of the Partnership
 - The GHS in the world of work: Mapping synergies between ILO Instruments and the GHS (ILO)
 - GHS capacity development: Lessons-learned study (UNITAR)
 - GHS legislation and standards guidance (UNITAR)
 - The 2021 FAO/WHO Labelling guidance (FAO)
 - Proposed follow-up work to the guidance; engagement with the agriculture sector (UNITAR)
 - The International Training Programme (ITP) and the GHS (Keml)
 - ICCA Recommendations on Modernization of The World Trade Organization¹ and links to the GHS (CEFIC)
 - Any other workstreams that stakeholders would like to provide updates on
3. Update on proposed implementation activities
 - EU and ICCA-funded proposal for the African region (SAICM secretariat leading the proposal writing, EU, CEFIC)
 - Other activities
4. International GHS targets and links to the Partnership
 - Current status of the Beyond 2020 intersessional process; and the proposed GHS-specific target and the GHS as an indicator (SAICM secretariat)
5. Outreach
 - Discussions with WTO and opportunities to showcase the GHS and the Partnership (UNITAR)
 - Future Policy Award 2021 | World Future Council – Kyrgyz Republic as winner of the award; potential follow-up, case study and regional information sharing (UNITAR)
 - Survey to understand GHS implementation needs/readiness (UNITAR)
 - Suggestions for contact lists
6. Open floor to hear from partners / brainstorm on suggested GHS Partnership activities and strategy
7. Next steps

¹ <https://icca-chem.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/ICCA-WTO-Modernization-Position-Paper.pdf>