



Global Partnership to Implement the GHS

Teleconference – 9 July 2024, 1400-1630 (CEST)

Summary report (30 August 2024)

1. Welcome

UNITAR, on behalf of the Partnership, opened the teleconference and welcomed the participants, who all introduced themselves. Twenty participants joined the call, representing a range of sectors and stakeholders. See annex 1 for the list of participants.

2. GHS Partnership strategy

As some participants were new to the Partnership meetings, Oliver Wootton (UNITAR) presented the GHS Partnership strategy and summarized its main elements, including mission, vision and objectives:

Vision

All countries have adopted the United Nations Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) in all relevant sectors.

Mission

To provide technical support, guidance and mobilise resources to stakeholders as they develop plans and legislation to adopt the GHS and implement the system in an effective manner.

Objectives

The Global Partnership has as its primary objective, Target B6 of the GFC:

Target B6 – By 2030, all Governments have implemented the GHS in all relevant sectors as appropriate for their national circumstances.

He explained the purpose of the strategy is to establish a basis for identifying opportunities to support countries and sectors with GHS implementation in their countries and thus to have a positive impact on international chemicals and waste management practices.

The work of the Partnership can be divided into three main categories: 1) National activities, including supporting the development of legislation, 2) Global guidance and training, and 3) Global knowledge

sharing and awareness raising. He also mentioned options for obtaining funding for the Partnership, which were further discussed later during the meeting, see point 7 below.

3. Outcomes of the last Partnership meeting

Mr. Wootton explained that one of the main points discussed at the previous GHS Partnership meeting (in April 2023) was the question: “**What are the benefits of the GHS?**”. This should be explained clearly to all stakeholders. He mentioned that UNITAR in the meantime has developed presentations and videos that explain these benefits, including a short video on the GHS and Agriculture.

Another issue discussed was **the tracking of countries that are “in the process” of developing GHS legislation**. UNITAR is working with the following countries that are developing GHS legislation: Benin, Côte d’Ivoire, El Salvador, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Moldova, North Macedonia, Pakistan, Tanzania, and Uganda.

Outreach is of course part of the GHS Partnership strategy. The Partnership organised a side event at ICCM5 (Bonn, September 2023) to provide updates from the Partnership and agencies.

4. Activities supporting the work of the Partnership

UNITAR

Oliver Wootton (UNITAR) gave updates on recent work on the GHS.

Peru

- Draft of GHS regulation (Special Programme)
- Draft of registers regulation (Keml funding)

El Salvador and Armenia (Switzerland funding)

- Country projects (roadmaps to legislation)

UNEP- in Cote d’Ivoire, Ghana, Kenya and Nigeria (EU & ICCA funded project)

- Legislation
- Training materials

This project was presented later on in more detail by UNEP (see point 6 below).

5 national projects (Germany funding)

- Draft agreement process:
 - Benin, Georgia, Moldova, North Macedonia, Pakistan

In addition, UNITAR has developed new materials and training: 1) four GHS introductory presentations (What is the GHS, Hazard classification, Hazard Communication, and Implementing the GHS and available data on substance classification), four leaflets with the same topics, 2) two short videos on the GHS, 3) the French version of UNITAR’s e-Learning course on the GHS, 4) a presentation and a video on GHS and Agriculture, 5) a presentation and video on GHS and Transport, 6) revision of UNITAR’s “Companion Guide”.

These materials can be found at <https://www.unitar.org/sustainable-development-goals/planet/our-portfolio/globally-harmonized-system-classification-and-labelling-chemicals>

Finally, UNITAR also worked with the WHO on organizing a workshop on the GHS in Uzbekistan in June 2024 (within the EU funded IOMC Toolbox Phase IV project), with the Armenian Ministry of Environment

on developing a roadmap on implementation of the GHS, and UNITAR organized an initial GHS workshop in October 2022 and a GHS legislation workshop in June 2023 in Tanzania. Further support has been requested by Tanzania after passing of a proposed amendment to the Law on Chemicals to include the GHS (expected in September 2024).

ILO

Halshka Graczyk (ILO) explained that ILO focuses on a workers' rights-based approach and that the GHS is essential in providing information to workers. They have noticed that there is a need for increasing awareness and are for instance working on this with India, Nepal and Latin American countries, specifically related to chemicals and agriculture. ILO is developing a new report on chemicals in agriculture for their constituents worldwide.

They are also currently working on chemicals in textiles in Pakistan where an update of safety and health regulations is being prepared. In Kenya they are providing Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) training in the informal sector.

Another important topic for ILO is the link between chemicals and climate change and its impact on workers (e.g. in storage and transport). And finally, ILO is developing a new standard on chemicals as an update to their ILO C170 Chemicals Convention.

OECD

Bob Diderich (OECD) noted that they maintain the eChem Portal to ensure it is up to date and functional. They make sure that tools that countries use for classification are also up to date (e.g. moving away from animal testing). In addition, OECD has been mandated to research the possibility of adding hazard classes on endocrine disruptors to the GHS.

Sylvie Poret (OECD) mentioned that they have received requests from Cambodia and Nigeria to work with them on gap analysis, compliance and enforcement (Cambodia) and reviewing legislation (Nigeria,) but they do not have the funds for this yet. If any partners are interested in co-operation, they can contact her. Oliver Wootton (UNITAR) reminded participants that Nigeria is also part of the UNEP project (see point 6).

ICCA

Chrysanthi Sofokleous (ICCA) gave a short presentation on the ICCA ambitions:

- 1) **TRANSPARENCY:** By 2030, ICCA provides access to available data on the safety and sustainability of our products. There is a specific ICCA working group on Transparency which focuses on "access to available safety data".
- 2) **CAPACITY BUILDING:** By 2030, ICCA has supported 30 countries in implementing effective chemical management systems. For this, the "30 by 2030" Strategy is being developed. This is associated with ICCA's contribution to the GFC Fund.
- 3) **SUSTAINABILITY:** By 2030, ICCA will actively steer their product portfolios, including processes, towards sustainable solutions. There is a dedicated ICCA Working Group to support companies (the same group that works on "access to available safety data" mentioned above).

Daniel Rios (ICCA) also noted that ICCA presented an informal document at the 46th session of the ECOSOC UN Sub-Committee of Experts on the GHS about proposed workshops for industry and

implementing authoritative bodies to highlight the implementation barriers and provide clear actionable items to improve effectiveness of the GHS. Some of the challenges that countries encounter are:

- Insufficient test capacity and difficulties in accessing safety data
- Countries adopting different revisions of the GHS and applying different building blocks
- Emerging countries, regulators and industry are struggling with GHS basic principles and how to implement the GHS
- There is insufficient technical guidance for countries which can result in further disharmonization and potential issues with international trade
- GHS revisions are published every two years whereas many countries need eight to ten years to update GHS related regulations
- Stagnant participation in the UN Sub-Committee of Experts on the GHS

He presented the following objectives:

- To look at the regulatory consequences of the ongoing work in updating the GHS, including the work of the Potential Hazard Issues working group (PHIWG) and their potential impact should they be included in the GHS;
- The need to coordinate the timing of the implementation of updated revisions of the GHS and why such work would be important to the harmonized implementation of the GHS.
- The identification of other barriers countries face in implementing or updating the GHS.

5. Global Framework on Chemicals

Targets in the GFC with direct links to the GHS:

- **Target B6** – By 2030, all Governments have implemented the GHS in all relevant sectors as appropriate for their national circumstances.
 - explicit mention of the GHS
- **Target A1** – By 2030, Governments have adopted and are implementing and enforcing legal frameworks, and have established appropriate institutional capacity to prevent or, where prevention is not feasible, minimize adverse effects from chemicals and waste as appropriate for their national circumstances.
 - GHS implementation a key component of legal frameworks
- **Target A7** – By 2035, stakeholders have taken effective measures to phase out HHPs in agriculture where the risks have not been managed and where safer and affordable alternatives are available, and to promote transition to and make available those alternatives.
 - GHS classifications form a key component of the criteria for identifying an HHP

In reference to legal frameworks, Bob Diderich (OECD) mentioned that the IOMC will form a small working group to identify the building blocks of chemicals management legislation. This may result in an overview document on different modules that make an effective chemicals management system, with the GHS a cornerstone module of any such system.

In addition, many of the D targets (sustainable solutions in product value chains) are underpinned by knowledge of the hazards. Furthermore, there is a call for the private sector to support the GFC: “The private sector should support the Framework objectives and targets of sound management of

chemicals and waste by providing contributions, including enforcement of the **GHS** globally, data generation, data sharing, partnerships and capacity-building”.

Oliver Wootton (UNITAR) asks the following regarding the B6 target:

- How to define priority countries?
 - Willingness/commitment?
- How to track?
 - Table (added to the Strategy?)
 - Survey, submission of interest, matchmaking?

Andrea Rother mentioned that countries could include references to the Global Partnership in project proposals, where they relate to the GHS. Additional support could then come through the partnership’s stakeholders, to add value to the projects.

She also asked if there is a GHS help desk. This could be helpful if countries have some initial questions. The Swedish Chemical agency has a helpdesk where questions related to the GHS could be asked. Oliver Wootton (UNITAR) mentioned that to add to this or go further is always a question of resources. Nonetheless, a webinar took place on 18 April to introduce learning materials. As part of it, a panel of experts (including from those within the audience) was available to answer questions from participants, in an open Q&A session.

Juergen Helbig (EU) commented on the EU Accession process, where several countries are in various stages of the candidate process. All such countries benefit from substantial support to align their legislation with EU legislation, including the EU CLP legislation. These countries can be expected to make substantial progress and hopefully they will start to implement the GHS soon, where not already in place.

The EU also works on Chemical, Biological and Radiological risk mitigation. The EU works with centres of excellence, which provide trainings to countries on risks derived from these sources, and he offered to put agencies in touch with these centres of excellence.

Friederike Breuer (FAO) gave a short update on the **Global Alliance on HHPs**. She explained that the modalities for the alliance are not finalized. There will be 4 pillars which will cover policy issues and knowledge. The GHS will be part of it of course. She also noted that the definition on HHPs is not agreed globally yet either, so it is not clear if all stakeholders will follow the FAO’s definition from the Code of Conduct.

6. Update on EU and ICCA-funded project in the African region

Olivier Baldan (UNEP) presented the project *Increasing the global Implementation of GHS through a pilot project focusing on Africa*. This project is implemented in Ghana, Kenya, Côte d’Ivoire and Nigeria and is funded by the EC and ICCA. In addition, project partners include UNITAR and ECHA. The expected outcome for this project is for the recipient countries to have adopted a GHS implementation plan (in this way creating a sound basis to build adequate control structures for the sound management of chemicals and waste and demonstrate substantive progress in its implementation with a view to scaling up the adoption of GHS globally). There are two outputs:

Output A) The effectiveness (or benefits) of the approach employed to support the implementation of the Global Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling on Chemicals is demonstrated from the pilot projects in the recipient countries, and results are documented and available for dissemination to key regional decision makers as appropriate.

Output B) Stakeholders from relevant ministries, civil society, labour organizations, chemical industry, and private sector (particularly in supply chains) gain knowledge on GHS to support its implementation. The four-year project includes development of a roadmap on GHS, a GHS law adoption process and an exit strategy. The project is currently in its second year. The draft roadmaps for all four countries have been developed by an external company. He presented the content of the roadmaps.

Daniel Rios (ICCA) asks if lessons-learned and experiences will be collected and if the project will look at whether the project has been successful or not. It was confirmed that lessons learned will be captured under output 1.

7. Programme planning

Target B6 mentions the year 2030; now only 6 years away. It will be important to have funding available to support countries in implementing the GHS. Jorge Ocana (UNITAR) explains that the GEF could be an avenue, as it mentions the GHS in their priorities. It is usually a longer process which can easily take more than one year from project submission to starting the project. He suggested to address 20-25 countries in one medium-sized project.

He mentioned some other funding mechanisms, such as the Special Programme, SIP (Minamata Convention), for new accession countries there is the EU Accession process, and also the OECD standards programme. For some funding mechanisms it can be valuable to discuss beforehand if a project concept could be potentially successful.

He proposed for the persons present to support a mandate for the Partnership to prepare a submission of a project to the GEF. All participants agreed and welcomed the suggested way forward; the Global Partnership to Implement the GHS would communicate with the GEF and seek to develop a proposal covering GHS implementation.

8. Next Steps

UNITAR thanked all participants present at the meeting for their efforts in promoting the GHS. A next meeting will be organised in approximately six months. If possible, it would be useful to organize a face-to-face GHS Partnership meeting a next time at an international conference or meeting where people will anyway meet each other.

Annex I

List of Participants GHS - Partnership - Teleconference 9 July 2024

	First Name	Surname	Agency/Institution	Email
1	Rodolfo	Alarcon	Colombia	ralarcon@minambiente.gov.co
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Annex II

Global Partnership to Implement the GHS

Teleconference – Tuesday 9 July 2024, 1400-1630 (CEST)

Agenda

Connection details:

<https://unitar.zoom.us/j/89521589635>

Meeting ID: 895 2158 9635

Pass Code: 989128

9. Welcome (15 mins)

- Welcome
- Introduction of participants
- Introduction to the Global Partnership, Partnership Strategy and recent activities
- Summary of last meeting

10. Activities supporting the work of the Partnership (suggested time: 40 mins)

- UNITAR updates
- ILO updates
- OECD updates
- Any other activities that stakeholders would like to provide updates on

11. Global Framework on Chemicals (suggested time: 20 mins)

- GHS-specific target
- Related targets (A1 – “national legislation”; A7 – HHPs; D targets related to private sector)
- Private-sector involvement: “...including enforcement of the GHS globally...”
- Status of GHS globally and which countries need support – strategy table with priority countries
- proposed HHPs global partnership
 - links to the GHS
- GHS implementation as part of the GFC Implementation Programmes

12. Update on EU and ICCA-funded project in the African region (suggested time: 15 mins)

13. Programme planning (suggested time: 30 mins)

- Session to discuss a global programme to support GHS Implementation
 - How to achieve the GFC B6 Target: a) ongoing opportunities for collaboration and joint planning; b) Possible funding – GEF, any other donors including the new GFC Trust Fund or the Special Programme
- Support from the group – Group discussion



- Planned next steps

14. Next meeting – when possible face-to-face, jointly with another meeting (5 mins)

15. AOB (15 mins)

16. Meeting close (10 mins)