



Scaling-up Commitment for Implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling

Informal meeting of interested stakeholders

Monday 30 September 2019, Bangkok (during IP3)

[Summary of discussions and key points](#)

1. Opening of the meeting and introduction to the paper

UNITAR opened the meeting on behalf of ILO, OECD and UNITAR - the three partners that had launched the WSSD GHS Global Partnership in 2002 - and welcomed the group to the informal meeting, noting the significant interest in the topic of implementing the GHS.

UNITAR introduced the draft paper on “Scaling-up Commitment for Implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling” and its key components. The broad intention is to mobilize stakeholder commitment to scale up GHS implementation and develop an ambitious plan to present at ICCM5 (Bonn, Germany, October 2020) consistent with and supportive of concurrent commitments to action beyond 2020. The paper suggests building upon an existing facilitating mechanism – that of the UNITAR/ILO/OECD Global Partnership – to enhance knowledge sharing and coordination of activities, bring in new partners, and revitalise efforts to implement the GHS, through a GHS implementation “coalition”. The “coalition” is open to all stakeholders engaged and/or committed to GHS implementation activities.

UNITAR thanked those that had read and provided comments on the paper. A new version integrating the comments will be shared during the second half of October 2019. That paper will serve as an initial basis for work.

2. Comments and reactions

- There was overall support for efforts to scale up commitment for GHS implementation worldwide. New actors, however, also need to engage
- Strengthening coordination of all relevant activities would be helpful in pursuit of broader implementation of the GHS
- High ambition is welcome and needed. It would help to identify priority areas and countries where impact can be maximised



- ICCM5 is a prime opportunity to ask for stakeholders to provide commitments to implement the GHS
- The beyond-2020 instrument could formally acknowledge the importance of GHS
- Development of a “one-pager” outlining the benefits of the GHS may be useful as a communications tool
- Regional economic integration organizations play an important role and more efforts may be needed to engage them in GHS implementation
- The GHS can be a strong tool for enhancing workplace safety (in relation to the management of chemicals), complementing the ILO conventions and management systems. The importance of bringing in workers’ unions was brought forward
- The OECD now has implementation of the GHS as a mandatory step in the accession process. This is a useful tool allowing the OECD to request implementation as part of such a process
- The significance of one of the stages following legislation, that of enforcement, was noted
- Peer review at the country level may be a valuable tool to assist with implementation of legislation and commitments and to assess progress made
- The Special Programme database may help in identifying countries that have taken institutional strengthening steps that could serve as foundations for implementation of the GHS. It could then be important to establish criteria upon which to select certain countries for activities. This could include elements such as political will and engagement, ability to act as lead country for a sub-region.
- A range of GHS implementation activities are ongoing (e.g. in the Asia-Pacific region supported by the Government of Japan, by KEMI, the Swedish Chemicals Agency, through their International Training Programme, and ICCA in the African region [with the German Government] and in ASEAN)
- The building block approach of the GHS can be helpful for implementation, providing countries with the opportunity to establish their own approach to legislation, including “lead in” times. This is also applicable to the choice of sectors to implement in, as some existing, domestic regulations, for example in consumer products, may be sufficient
- Reference was made to the EU chemicals industry’s efforts to include a reference to UN GHS implementation by countries that engage in Free Trade Agreements with the EU. It was suggested to upscale these efforts at global level
- A suggestion was made to enhance existing GHS workshop materials, as some materials may be considered as too technical

3. Proposed next steps:

In order to present the GHS plan at ICCM5, a number of activities are envisaged:

- The development of a “one-pager” outlining the benefits of GHS
- Conducting a mapping exercise of current initiatives on GHS
- The organization of a global workshop to identify lessons learned, good practices and opportunities to scale up action (see below)
- Strengthening engagement of regional economic bodies e.g. through organization of a workshop (or a dedicated session)
- The further development of the GHS paper (circulated in July 2019 to stakeholders)



- The development of a GHS implementation plan to be presented at ICCM5 – including commitments, roles and responsibilities as well as mechanisms for implementation
- Identifying opportunities to mobilize adequate resources to support GHS implementation, as well as coordination and knowledge sharing.
- The organization of a side event at ICCM5 to present the GHS global plan

Global lessons learned and GHS action workshop in 2020

Since 2002, a range of GHS activities have been implemented. A global lessons-learned workshop could take place during the first quarter of 2020, preferably in advance of IP4 (23-27 March 2020). This could provide “coalition” stakeholders, alongside others, the chance to discuss lessons-learned in implementation activities, opportunities for the future and steps to encourage implementation in new countries. Furthermore, such a workshop could integrate a dedicated day with regional economic bodies, as regional implementation gains attention and support. Additionally, based on the discussions and outcomes of the workshop, a clear plan of GHS implementation, with clear roles, objectives and targets, would be developed and submitted to all partners for their consideration. Governments and stakeholders in a position to do so are encouraged to provide support to help proceed with organisation, travels and other logistics.



Annex 1: Additional comments regarding the GHS from the remainder of the IP3 week (after the meeting of the “coalition”)

While not part of the meeting, it is worth noting a few elements from IP3 in relation to the GHS:

- The Joint Statement of the High Ambition Alliance on chemicals and wastes (SAICM/IP.3/INF/14):
 - “We, the members of the High Ambition Alliance, believe that the Beyond 2020 process must respond effectively to the challenges we see with chemicals and waste today, and that the response is best accelerated through a framework that will build broad coalitions among governments and other stakeholders.”
 - “The implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) by all countries is an essential part to achieve this and should be a requirement in the new framework.”
- One of the alternatives proposed as a target under A3 was:
 - “Alt. 1 A.3: By 20XX [legal requirements] to implement the GHS have been adopted in countries.”
 - The European Union and its Member States (as the proposer), ICCA and UNITAR supported this, among others. Others were more circumspect about specifically naming a voluntary tool, when it could be placed lower down, into the indicators.



Annex 2: List of participants

GHS - partnership - coordination meeting			
30 September 2019, Bangkok, Thailand			
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