

Stakeholder workshop on strengthening governance for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020

From national to global: Learning from experience, exploring options

Organized by the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) with support from the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety of Germany, and the Federal Office for the Environment of Switzerland
28 February & 1 March 2019, Geneva, Switzerland (hosted at the ILO)

Summary outcome document

1 Introduction

On 28 February - 1 March 2019, more than 60 participants from governments, intergovernmental organizations, industry bodies, workers' organisations, civil society organizations and academic institutions from around the world gathered in Geneva, Switzerland for a workshop to discuss governance issues relevant for the intersessional process on the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020. In their deliberations, participants took into account the "Co-chairs' paper" from March 2019 to support the intersessional process¹. The workshop was organized by UNITAR with support from the Governments of Germany and Switzerland, hosted at the International Labour Organization (ILO).

The workshop had the goal to facilitate knowledge-sharing, discuss good practices and identify lessons-learned and opportunities on a range of governance topics relevant for the beyond 2020 process. The scope of the workshop recognised that governance issues are connected through various levels (i.e. local, national, regional and global). It also considered initiatives at the sectoral level, as well as stakeholder networks and initiatives (e.g. private governance).

Specific objectives of the workshop included:

- discuss how the current global chemicals and waste management framework fosters collaboration across agreements, sectors and stakeholders:
- share governance-specific knowledge and experience from other global regimes (e.g. biodiversity governance) and relevant sectors (e.g. health sector)
- identify good practices of private sector governance beyond compliance and explore how relevant action can be considered and advanced globally; and
- explore options for global governance structures and decision-making that can foster wide ownership, as well as commitment and engagement of countries, sectors and actors to achieve results

¹ <http://saicm.org/Portals/12/Documents/meetings/OEWG3/doc/K1900262-SAICM-OEWG3-4-Co-Chairs-Paper-ADVANCE.pdf>

A fundamental and cross-cutting question addressed by participants was how to strengthen and organize international chemicals and waste governance, in order to enhance high-level commitment and engagement of all relevant sectors and stakeholders.

Learning from other clusters

The biodiversity cluster was presented as an example of a collaborative model. The 2011-2020 Strategic Plan for Biodiversity is supported through commitments of all major stakeholders and by a liaison group of biodiversity-related conventions. The strategy was first adopted by the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biodiversity and gained a higher level of attention at the 65th General Assembly (GA, 2010), which declared a decade (2011-2020) of biodiversity. National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans are linked to, and contribute to, the 20 global Aichi targets as an important element of the Strategic Plan. The Biodiversity Indicator Partnership supports monitoring by developing and using common indicators. Throughout the workshop, reference was also made to climate change as another area from which lessons could be drawn.

2 Workshop insights and outcomes

Opportunities to strengthen voluntary, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder global governance for the sound management of chemicals and waste

Participants explored a range of opportunities to strengthen voluntary, multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder global governance, referred to as “SAICM 2.0” in the co-chairs’ paper. Insights included:

- The current SAICM model is inclusive and voluntary, bringing in many stakeholders.
- National implementation is a key component for achieving progress at the global level. SAICM has been beneficial in supporting broad, national structures for the management of chemicals and waste.
- The current model of SAICM is run similar to a convention, but without the legal force. Opportunities exist to promote a more dynamic framework that considers stakeholders’ motivations.
- Key to implementation is “empowerment”, with stakeholders taking on leadership roles under a flexible and cooperative approach.
- Multi-sectoral engagement is vital; a new platform will need to facilitate the engagement of major sectors. Consideration should be given as to how resources can be mobilized for such engagement.
- It is important to engage other sectors and stakeholders in the process of setting global targets that require their engagement to achieve them.
- Implementation at the national level could replicate the global SAICM model (multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder), and national focal points could be nominated for more than one sector.
- National level activities could also focus on the overall orientation and guidance which offers a set of basic elements.
- A new platform may consider focusing its resources on where it can make the biggest impact, such as world-wide implementation of the GHS and basic policies and legislation.
- There is value in clarifying how the chemicals and waste conventions will work with the beyond-2020 process as well as topics to bring in their contribution. A future platform would benefit from being relevant for all international agreements.
- IOMC Participating Organizations play an important role in facilitating multi-sectoral participation. The future platform can benefit from strong participation of IOMC Participating Organizations,

potentially starting with the planning of meetings and use of the IOMC logo. This could help to encourage certain sectors and representatives see that the platform serves as a shared space.

Ensuring commitment at the highest level

The workshop discussed possible approaches to enhance the engagement of institutions in international chemicals and waste management, and to obtain commitment at the highest levels of decision-making. This had been achieved at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development, when heads of state and government set the 2020 timeline. Insights included:

- An international governance model that facilitates multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder engagement at all levels is essential to the successful implementation of strategic objectives and targets.
- Public awareness can often prompt political awareness. Nonetheless, it is important not to assume this political awareness will translate automatically to success.
- Integrating chemicals and waste issues into the agenda of governing bodies of relevant international organizations is important.
- Co-convening the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM) may facilitate common ownership among international bodies and their memberships.
- A UN GA resolution for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 may facilitate multi-sectoral engagement and ensure coherence across the cluster. Such a mandate can reinforce commitment to “Delivering as one” building upon what is already in place and respecting the existing provisions for the work of the organizations and autonomy of the Conventions.
- Other options to obtain higher-level commitment may include the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the High-Level Political Forum.
- The 2030 Agenda is agreed to at the highest level (UN GA), but implementation is assigned to lower levels, to specific agencies and stakeholders. This split of high-level impetus and implementation at lower levels could be replicated.
- Recognizing that high level commitment was obtained in 2006 when SAICM was first agreed, we need to consider how we can maintain high level commitment to support sustained action at all levels.
- Whatever model is chosen, global governance for chemicals and waste management should be flexible and agile to keep pace with the rapidly changing global landscape of the chemical industry and chemical-intensive industry sectors. It could also make a contribution in identifying emerging issues based on sound science.

Treaties and voluntary approaches in international chemicals and waste governance

Different governance approaches exist at the global level to advance the sound management of chemicals and waste. Insights included:

- There are advantages and disadvantages to legally-binding and voluntary approaches, with examples indicating where they have or have not been effective. Where voluntary approaches are not effective, other approaches (e.g. legally-binding) may be considered.
- For example, pursuing legally-binding options may require time and may not be agile enough to deal with critical issues in time. Different geopolitical aspects may impact the effectiveness of voluntary and legally-binding instruments. Some countries may prioritize legally-binding instruments, and may see that it comes with more stable funding.

- Many noted that the broad, multi-stakeholder and -sector nature of SAICM has been valuable and helpful.
- The Paris Agreement on climate change adopted a “blended” approach to combine voluntary action with legal requirements which focus on common rules (e.g. measurement) rather than mitigation commitments.

Sectoral strategies or road maps

Examples exist where sectors or industries groups have developed specific roads maps to address chemicals and waste issues. The WHO Chemicals Road map, agreed to at the 70th World Health Assembly (2017), was presented and discussed as an example. An industry-focused example, the World Business Council for Sustainable Development’s Chemical Sector SDG, was also discussed. Insights included:

- A Roadmap approach can be beneficial in guiding stakeholders on where and how to start, and who to engage.
- It can be inclusive and encourage stakeholders to take initiative and ownership and helps develop a network of committed stakeholders.
- The WHO chemicals road map is simple to understand while reflecting the cross-cutting nature of issues. It has been used to undertake gap analyses, develop action plans and feed into national chemicals planning processes. Many workshop participants spoke positively of the road map and described its usefulness to them.
- The road map approach could be a useful tool for other sectors and stakeholder groups to develop and showcase their commitments beyond 2020.

National action plans, programmes and inter-ministerial coordination

National action plans, programmes and inter-ministerial coordination are referred to in the co-chairs’ paper as possible approaches to drive country-level priority setting and action to engage key sectors and stakeholders. Insights included:

- National action plans can be good tools to facilitate inter-ministerial coordination, set national priorities and facilitate discussions with donors and partners.
- For National Action Plans to be successful, it is essential to: have all sectors at the table, develop concrete targets that are relevant domestically, cultivate ownership, and set priorities considering available resources within each sector.
- Experience from the Aichi Targets shows that national plans need to take into account national situations and priorities, in addition to global targets.
- National action plans that have a limited scope can be more easily developed.
- Bringing several national plans under one umbrella may be beneficial.
- Action plans are useful to engage with and consider the needs of various sectors, and may also benefit from engaging with subnational actors for implementation.

National assessments, feedback and peer review

There may be potential value in providing countries with external feedback or advice. Taking into account experience from the international health regulations (IHR) and the OECD environmental performance reviews, insights included:

- While country-driven processes are important, there is potential value in providing countries with external feedback or advice. Feedback is important to foster continual improvement and needs to be done in the spirit of positive support. There is a demonstrated desire for such peer review.
- A gap analysis helps to ensure that reporting addresses the correct issues, and fosters information sharing, including on best practice.
- Under the beyond-2020 platform, it would be important to allow time to review reporting, discuss gaps in implementation and facilitate learning.
- There may be an opportunity to use other reporting initiatives to contribute to overall reporting, reducing duplication.

Regional institutions and programmes

A range of different regional mechanisms and institutions are engaged, such as SAICM regional groups and meetings, and the inclusion of chemicals and waste issues in harmonization of trade within economic integration organizations. Insights included:

- Regional organizations can have significant roles in the management of chemicals and waste. However, relevant capacities need to be developed, and could benefit from “lead countries”.
- Regional mapping assessments could be useful to identify and prioritize those with potential to have an impact and benefit from increased capacities.
- Bringing in regional groups would need a stakeholder engagement process, with mutual attendance at meetings, and ensuring there is commitment from all sides.
- Regional groups could harmonize notification systems or facilitate transport within a region without the need for notifications. For example, this may facilitate greater trade in waste and recycling.

Private sector governance and standard setting beyond 2020

Both the chemicals industry and chemical-intensive downstream sectors, often through associations, have developed standards and/or codes to guide action of member companies. Insights included:

- Private sector initiatives can support overall policy goals, though must complement other efforts and contribute to measurable goals or targets in sectors and increase transparency.
- Relevant initiatives could be listed under a platform to showcase efforts and commitments. Listing would benefit from criteria and reporting on progress made.
- Downstream users (including waste management and recycling companies) should be engaged. Such engagement may be facilitated by a focus on the circular economy.
- A new platform could be an excellent opportunity to share knowledge among sectors and develop intra-sectoral harmonization (such as on pest and pesticide terminology). Sectors may be willing to learn off each other, if given a platform to share relevant information.
- The chemicals in products programme has some lessons-learned, such as the identification of priority sectors; engagement with these sectors may remain a focus.
- Private sector initiatives at the national level can also support development of national legal requirements, giving leaders an incentive to continue and lift up others.
- Consumers may be a driver of sustainable consumption and production.

3 Conclusion

The workshop concluded on the need to resuscitate – and maintain - the high-level commitment of the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development and carried to ICCM1 through co-hosting the Conference by the then-IOMC Participating Organizations and UNDP in 2006. The intersessional process on beyond 2020 creates a window of opportunity to consider how such high-level and multi-stakeholder commitment could be raised again and how new actors could be engaged in international chemicals and waste governance. Integrating chemicals and waste management considerations into other forums is equally important. To achieve this and to pick up the spirit of 2002, new messages, messengers and commitments are needed to ensure that international chemicals and waste governance beyond 2020 is fit for purpose.