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ACP MEAs NEWSLETTER



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SAICM and the Quick Start Programme: Invigorating action on chemicals management

Chemicals are a vital part of our daily life. They provide society with a wide range of benefits, particularly increased agricultural and industrial productivity and improvements in the control of diseases. Society increasingly relies on chemicals, making them indispensable for virtually all manufacturing processes and turning the chemicals production industry into a mainstay of the world economy.

On the other hand, if not soundly managed, chemicals also have the potential to cause considerable health and environmental problems throughout their life cycle, from production to disposal. Pollution generated during the production process, hazards from improper handling, storage, and transportation, occupational accidents and diseases, and environmental contamination due to unsound disposal methods are just a few of the challenges. Initially health and environmental concerns were associated with the use of pesticides in the agricultural sector, but increasingly industrial and consumer chemicals are reported to cause serious health and environmental problems. This is exacerbated by the increasing industrialization of countries around the world. Between 70,000 and 100,000 chemicals may already be on the market, with an estimated 1,500 new ones being marketed each year. New chemicals, including nanotechnologies, pose additional potential risks to human health and the environment, which are yet to be fully identified and managed.

To mitigate potential risks chemicals need to be managed properly with a view to achieving a sustainable level of agricultural and industrial development and to ensure a high level of environmental and human health protection. These concerns were translated into the body of international policy and law on sound management of chemicals. The last 30 to 40 years have seen the adoption of “soft” or non-legally binding instruments, such as the Rio Declaration, Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, the FAO International Code of Conduct on the Distribution and Use of Pesticides, the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labeling of Chemicals, and Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers. Several legally binding instruments have also been developed

and adopted and ratified by numerous countries, including ILO conventions on chemical safety, the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade, and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

Sound management of chemicals in ACP countries

Complementing international regulatory regimes, various actions and initiatives have taken place at the national and local levels. Many countries have improved their chemicals management through regulatory measures, strengthened information systems and inventories of specific chemicals, prepared national chemicals management profiles and national implementation plans for the Stockholm Convention, established national coordinating committees for chemicals management and integrated national programmes for sound chemicals management. Many countries also have active and well informed public interest movements promoting chemicals awareness and good practices. Meanwhile the chemicals industry has developed and extended its own programmes to contribute to better chemicals management. Many challenges however, remain.

Developing countries and countries with economy in transition, including the Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries continue to suffer from the lack of capacity to effectively deal with the challenges to human health and the environment posed by chemicals. Least developed countries and small island developing States are particularly vulnerable. There is often limited or no information on many chemicals currently in use and often limited or no access to information that does exist. There are inadequate resources available to address chemical safety issues in many countries, particularly to bridge the widening gap between developed countries on the one hand and developing countries and countries with economies in transition on the other. This makes the implementation of established international policies uneven. On the international level, the existing policy framework for chemicals is not completely adequate and needs to be further strengthened.

The role of SAICM and Quick Start Programme (QSP)

To establish an overarching framework for global action on chemical hazards and to enable governments and other stakeholders to collaborate more effectively on reducing toxic risks, the international community adopted in 2006 the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), a policy framework to promote chemical safety. Its overall objective is to achieve the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation goal that by 2020, chemicals should be used and produced in ways that minimize significant adverse effects on the environment and human health. SAICM is characterized by its multi-stakeholder and multi-sector participation, involving representatives of Governments, inter-governmental organizations and non-governmental organizations from sectors such as agriculture, environment, health, industry and labour.

Progress towards reaching the 2020 goal in developing countries and countries with economies in transition depends, in part, on the availability of financial resources provided by the private sector and bilateral, multilateral and global agencies or donors. One of the initiatives undertaken within the context of SAICM was the establishment of the Quick Start Programme (QSP). The QSP Trust Fund supports activities to enable initial capacity building and implementation of SAICM in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. The project activities funded by the QSP trust fund address the following three strategic priorities: (a) Development of national chemical profiles and the identification of capacity needs for sound chemicals management; (b) Development and strengthening of national chemicals management institutions, plans, programmes and activities to implement SAICM, building upon work conducted to implement international agreements and initiatives; and (c) Undertaking analysis, interagency coordination, and public participation activities for integrating, i.e. mainstreaming, the sound management of chemicals in national strategies and development assistance priorities.

Project activities may include the establishment and/or strengthening of inter-ministerial and multi-stakeholders consultation and coordination mechanisms, the development of national chemicals policies, programmes and legislation in relation to the implementation of chemicals MEAs, the identification of capacity for implementation and enforcement obligations under MEAs and training and strengthening institutional capacities for the sound management of chemicals. In addition, each project defines specific objectives and activities. The QSP Trust Fund supports projects of up to two years' duration with grants of USD 50,000 to USD 250,000 for Governments and civil society networks of developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

Activities funded through QSP

Two hundred and thirty-three project applications were submitted to the QSP Trust Fund between May 2006 and February 2010. Of these 92 projects for total funding of approximately USD 18 million have been approved. The approved projects are implemented by 83 Governments and eight civil society organizations and involve activities in 85 countries, including 41 least developed countries and small island developing States. In 2009 the SAICM Trust Fund received an additional EUR 1.95 million from the European Commission under the ACP MEAs project to support the sound management of chemicals in ACP countries. To date, the Implementation Committee has approved five projects to be supported from this funding. Djibouti's capacity to control the transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and chemicals is being strengthened to ensure their environmentally sound management. In Mauritius, the Mauritius/UNDP/UNEP Partnership Initiative for SAICM Implementation aims to support the country in its efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals by addressing gaps in its chemicals management regime. Institutional capacities are being built in Rwanda and Burundi for implementing the Stockholm Convention on POPs and raise awareness. Pesticide management is being strengthened in the CILSS (Comité permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse dans le Sahel) member countries Burkina Faso, Chad, Gambia, Mauritania and Niger. The activity will focus on strengthening the effectiveness of the Sahelian Pesticide Committee in administration and information provision on pesticide registrations and enhancing the technical capacities of the Committee in evaluating pesticides submitted for registration. In the Pacific, the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga will establish a pilot network of poison information desks to build a poison information network with the objective to enhance sub-regional capacity to deal with chemical-related poisoning. The SAICM secretariat collaborates with the ACP MEAs African, Caribbean and Pacific Hubs on these and other projects and activities in the ACP regions. These efforts will help to ensure the achievement of the maximum impacts from the project activities and avoid duplication of efforts.

There are still opportunities for ACP countries eligible for the SAICM QSP funding to apply for grants from the QSP Trust Fund.

For more information, visit our website:
<http://www.saicm.org>

Tatiana Terekhova
SAICM secretariat

African Hub (AUC)

The African Hub will convene with AMCEN a training workshop on climate change negotiations in March to discuss common issues of concern and to discuss an African negotiating position for upcoming climate change meetings. Together with the Nairobi Convention Secretariat and UNEP, the African Hub will review the domestication requirements of selected African countries and develop a guidance manual for the ratification and implementation of the Protocol on Land-based Sources of Pollution to the Nairobi Convention. The Hub is also working on a dedicated web-page to provide information to partners and interested countries. To provide a sound science-base to their work, the African Hub is building linkages with the work of the African Monitoring of Environment for Sustainable Development (AMESD) project. For further information please contact the African Hub coordinators Ms. Fatoumata Ndoeye (NDOYEF@africa-union.org, [fnjallow@yahoo.com](mailto:fjnallow@yahoo.com)) and Mr. Livingstone Sindanyigaya (sindanyigaya@yahoo.com).

Caribbean Hub (CARICOM)

The Caribbean Hub is organizing a regional project management workshop on 22-26 March in Barbados. Caribbean environmental officers will use their training to develop MEA-related projects. The Caribbean Hub is linking with the Caribbean Community Climate Change Centre to develop learning kits for climate change adaptation. Plans are under way to conduct a regional training workshop on MEA negotiation skills in July and to make course materials available online. The Caribbean Hub is also preparing factsheets and other public awareness materials on MEAs. For further information please contact the Caribbean Hub coordinator, Mr. Ronald Williams (rwilliams@caricom.org).

Pacific Hub (SPREP)

The Pacific Hub will assist in the development of an MEA clearing house mechanism to be launched in three countries. The Pacific Hub will also provide in-country technical assistance in selected countries on mainstreaming MEAs into National Sustainable Development Strategies. A sub-regional workshop on hazardous waste data collection is tentatively planned for the period June to August. For further information please contact the interim Pacific Hub coordinator Mr. Seve Paeniu (SeveP@sprep.org).

UNEP Risøe Centre

The UNEP Risøe Centre is finalizing project agreements with seven countries in Africa and three countries in the Caribbean. Cooperation will take the form of support to establishment of Designated National Authorities (DNA), promotion of CDM projects and portfolios, support to access voluntary carbon markets, etc. The UNEP Risøe Centre will also assist countries to design Gold standard projects to enable Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to tap voluntary carbon markets. For further information please contact Ms. Miriam Hinostroza (Miriam.Hinostroza@risoe.dk).

SAICM Secretariat

The SAICM secretariat is finalizing project agreements for five Quick Start Programme projects funded through ACP MEAs. Once finalized, funds will be used to i) strengthen the capacity of Djibouti to control the transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and chemicals; ii) implement the SAICM in Mauritius; iii) build institutional capacity in Burundi and Rwanda to implement the Stockholm POPs Convention and raise awareness on POPs issues; iv) strengthen pesticide management in CILSS (Comité permanent Inter-Etats de Lutte contre la Sécheresse au Sahel) Member States, viz. Burkina Faso, Chad, Gambia, Mauritania and Niger; and v) establish a Poison Information Network for the Pacific in the Cook Islands, Kiribati, Samoa, Solomon Islands and Tonga. Twenty additional applications were sent during the eighth QSP application round, which closed on 14 February 2010. These applications are currently under screening and will be appraised by the QSP Trust Fund Implementation Committee at its ninth meeting on 30-31 March 2010 in Geneva, Switzerland. The results of the ninth application round will be available in mid-April 2010. For further information please contact Ms. Tatiana Terekhova (tatiana.terekhova@unep.org).

FAO

The FAO will be working with a number of African countries to undertake needs assessments and preparatory work towards eventual elimination of obsolete pesticides. This work runs in conjunction with the Africa Stockpiles Programme, and projects will be developed in additional countries. In collaboration with the Comité Sahélien des Pesticides and the African Union Commission, FAO is developing a programme on the enforcement of common pesticides registration covering nine Sahelian countries and the possibility to extend this registration system to MOWA countries. In addition FAO is developing, in collaboration with the Agence Universitaire de la Francophonie, a short and long-term course on pesticide risk reduction in the Francophone African countries. The FAO will also conduct an inventory / data collection of obsolete pesticides in the Caribbean. In the coming months, the FAO will commence work on contaminated site investigation, IPM project development and pesticide legislative review in the Pacific region. Work will also continue on the development of the Pesticide Risk Management masters course in collaboration with the University of Cape Town and the finalization of technical guidelines for pesticide risk management. Communication and awareness raising will be carried out in the three regional Hubs. For further information please contact Mr. Mark Davis (Mark.Davis@fao.org).

UNCCD-GM

GM is in the process of analyzing relevant international and regional policies, as well as external sources of funding, to build a donors' matrix for the Pacific sub-region and will identify innovative and applicable financing mechanisms to design Integrated Financing Strategies (IFS) covering all Pacific Island States. The GM will also continue its support to the Republic of Fiji and the Solomon Islands to elaborate national Integrated Financing Strategies (IFS). GM is identifying innovative financial sources for Sustainable Land Management with West African sub-regional organizations while developing analytical studies on key issues related to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (CCD) issues. For further information please contact Ms. Ines Chaalala (i.chaalala@global-mechanism.org).

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The ACP MEAs newsletter is published quarterly. It includes opinion pieces by the programme partners as well as an update of latest developments. For more information on ACP MEAs please contact:

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Please also visit:
<http://www.unep.org/AfricanCaribbeanPacific/MEAs/>



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