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From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

Subject: Fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management
(ICCM5) (Bonn, 25 - 30 September 2023)
- Information from the Presidency and the Commission

Delegations will find in the Annex an information note from the Presidency and the Commission on the above subject, to be dealt with under "Any other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 18 December 2023.

Fifth International Conference on Chemicals management (ICCM5)

(Bonn, Germany, 25 - 30 September 2023)

- Information from the Presidency and the Commission -

Introduction and Overview

The 5th International Conference on Chemicals management (ICCM5) was held from 25 to 30 September 2023 in Bonn, Germany, and was attended by 767 participants. In her opening statement, minister Steffi Lemke (DE) underlined that chemicals management is a global problem that requires international cooperation, balancing diverse interests and engaging all stakeholders. She urged the Conference to send a clear message that all stakeholders are ready to tackle the pollution crisis.

The objective of the meeting was to complete the negotiations and agree on a new framework to succeed the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). ICCM5 agreed on the Global Framework on Chemicals – For a planet free of harm from chemicals and waste, which was supported by 12 ICCM5 resolutions and a High-Level declaration - the Bonn Declaration - expressing political commitments for the follow-up and implementation of the Framework.

The Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC) is a voluntary, multistakeholder, multisectoral framework like its predecessor, SAICM, adopted in 2006.

High-Level segment

On Thursday 28 September in the afternoon and on Friday 29 September in the morning, a High-Level segment was organised with several ministers and many high-level participants contributing to the discussion. Commissioner Sinkevičius, who delivered an introduction speech during this segment highlighted the strong interlinkages between determined and ambitious action on chemicals and waste and achieving the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, which was very much welcomed by participants, as well as the threat from pollution and endocrine disruptors. The ministers from BE and NL recalled that business as usual is no longer an option and underlined that more efforts are needed by all stakeholders to improve capacity building, increase the funding and eliminate double standards. High-level participants from governments, industry, intergovernmental organizations and nongovernmental organizations participated in closed “world cafe” roundtable discussions on three themes:

- Strengthening chemicals and waste management systems and capacities: Bridging implementation gaps through multi-sectoral and stakeholder collaboration.
- Fostering solutions and sustainable chemistry innovation in economic and industry sectors along value chains: Mobilizing leadership.
- Maximizing contributions of sound management of chemicals and waste in achieving Sustainable Development Goals: Creating linkages and fostering action.

Elements of the Global Framework on Chemicals

1. Scope and vision

The agreement reached found a balance between the title “Global Framework on Chemicals” and its tagline “For a planet free of harm from chemicals and waste”, seen in conjunction with the scope covering “the life cycle of chemicals, including products and waste” and the references throughout the text of the framework to “chemicals and waste”.

The vision agreed for the Global Framework is: *a planet free of harm from chemicals and waste for a safe, healthy and sustainable future.*

2. Strategic objectives and targets

The new framework has five strategic objectives with associated timebound targets. Their achievement will be measured with indicators. Some indicators have already been identified and others will be determined at the next international conference.

The five strategic objectives are as follows:

A. Legal frameworks, institutional mechanisms and capacities are in place to support and achieve the safe and sustainable management of chemicals throughout their life cycle.

Important targets under this strategic objective are those related to the adoption and implementation of legal frameworks on chemicals and waste; prevention and minimization of adverse effects of chemicals; establishment of poison centres; reducing the risks from highly hazardous pesticides; and finally a target to regulate the export of hazardous chemicals.

B. Comprehensive and sufficient knowledge, data and information are generated, available and accessible to all to enable informed decisions and actions.

The targets under this strategic objective are mostly focusing on having available and publicly accessible information on the intrinsic properties of chemicals, their production, their uses including in the supply chain, emissions and releases of chemicals and waste, as well as information on the presence of chemicals in humans and environmental media. A target on the implementation by countries of the UN Globally Harmonised System for classification and labelling of chemicals that was a priority for the EU was agreed.

C. Issues of concern are identified, prioritised and addressed.

D. Safer alternatives and innovative and sustainable solutions in product value chains are in place so that benefits to human health and the environment are maximized and risks are prevented or, where prevention is not feasible, minimized.

This strategic objective is accompanied by relevant targets aiming to promote safe and sustainable alternatives for the public and private sectors, including their research and innovation programs. Amongst the private sectors there is a target that specifically calls for action of the financial sector.

E. Enhanced implementation occurs through increased and effective resource mobilization, partnerships, cooperation, capacity-building, and integration into all relevant decision-making processes.

The targets under this strategic objective look into means of implementation and capacity building. There is a target related to the need to integrate chemicals management in key environmental, health and labour policies, making specific reference to the linkages between chemicals pollution and climate change and biodiversity loss, which is strongly linked with the UN narrative on the triple planetary crisis.

3. Principles and approaches for the framework

Principles were the subject of a lot of discussions in the negotiations on the new Global Framework, in particular given the strong requests for addressing the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities. However, it was finally agreed that there would be no singling out of specific principles if the reference to the Rio Declaration was maintained.

This achievement is important for the EU, as there is a clear need for engagement of all the states and stakeholders globally in sound management of chemicals and waste, under the same principles and same conditions.

The principles and approaches that remain highlighted in the Section IV are: knowledge, transparency, human rights, groups in vulnerable situations, gender equality, preventive approaches, precautionary approach, just transition and collaboration and participation.

4. Mechanisms to support implementation

A new tool to strengthen implementation of the framework has been introduced by adding implementation programmes. Such implementation programmes may be adopted and would include, in a flexible and dynamic format, the actions that stakeholders intend to take or contribute to at the national, regional, and/or international levels to successfully meet the relevant targets. The programmes would invite the Inter-Organisation Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) participating organizations and other intergovernmental organizations to contribute actively and to further strengthen international cooperation and multi-sectoral engagement in the sound management of chemicals and waste.

In addition, the important role of national implementation and regional cooperation and coordination is emphasised in the GFC, giving clear direction to governments as regards their role. The GFC is unique as regards its multistakeholder and multisectoral nature and therefore, the importance of involving all relevant sectors and stakeholders at the local, national, regional and international levels for the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle is underlined.

The GFC encourages in particular broad engagement at the international level, highlighting the important role of the IOMC, where FAO, ILO, UNDP, UNEP, UNIDO, UNITAR, WHO, OEDC and the World Bank are coordinating their work and cooperating to advance sound chemicals management.

5. Issues of Concern

An Issue of Concern is defined as “...an issue involving any phase in the life cycle of chemicals which has not yet been generally recognized, is insufficiently addressed, or arises as a potential concern from the current level of scientific information, and which may have adverse effects on human health and/or the environment that would benefit from international action.”

The framework outlines the process to be used by stakeholders for nominating, selecting, and adopting issues of concern and in case several issues are nominated, the Conference may choose to prioritize the issues that are most important for protecting human health and the environment, and regarding on which the most progress can be made, considering the precautionary approach.

As regards implementation of identified issues of concern, the framework outlines specific activities to be undertaken by the *ad hoc* multi-stakeholder working groups to coordinate the development and implementation of workplans, targets and indicators for actions agreed to by the Conference. Such a workplan should include targets and indicators specific to each issue to allow progress to be assessed.

6. Institutional arrangements and international cooperation

In terms of institutional arrangements, it was agreed that the Conference would take place every third year, unless decided otherwise and would be preceded by an OEWG. The resolution adopting the Framework states that the GFC is a successor to the SAICM, which means that both resolutions adopted by previous International Conferences and Rules of the Procedure of the ICCM remain to apply.

As regards international cooperation, it was agreed to well align the work under the Framework with developments under the processes established for development of a Plastic Agreement and for establishment of the Science Policy Panel on chemicals, waste and pollution prevention.

7. Taking stock of progress

To address one weakness of SAICM, there was broad agreement that reporting and evaluation of achievements should be improved. Thus, the GFC invites all stakeholders to report on implementation efforts and the progress of indicators and milestones, and contributions to implement the GFC in meeting the Strategic Objectives and their associated targets.

To ease implementation, a measurability structure has been developed, which illustrates the different categories of indicators that may be used to track progress and impact of the framework.

8. Financing

Because of the voluntary character of SAICM and its successor, the negotiation on the financing of the new framework was challenging, as it was not possible to request mandatory contributions through the framework. The most difficult point was on the financial support of the framework.

Stakeholders agreed to the establishment of a time-limited global fund, a positive step to support the work under the GFC. The functioning of this fund is fully based on the Quick Start Programme (QSP), used for the initial implementation of SAICM. Furthermore, the cash balance left in the QSP (EUR 2.5m) will be transferred to this new fund. During the HLS, the German government pledged EUR 20m to the new fund.

Resolutions

ICCM5 had negotiated 18 resolutions and finally adopted the following 12 resolutions, most of them of rather operative nature already addressing the implementation of the GFC or work to be done to prepare the next international conference:

- High-level Declaration and Framework
- Implementation Arrangements

- Emerging Policy Issues and Issues of Concern
- Measurability Structure
- International Cooperation and Coordination
- Programme of Work and Budget
- Financial Considerations
- Implementation Programmes
- Development of Guidelines for National Focal Points
- Mainstreaming a Gender Perspective and Promoting Gender Equality and Empowerment of all women and girls in Chemicals and Waste Management:
- Global Alliance on Highly Hazardous Pesticides
- Health Surveillance Systems

The Bonn Declaration¹

The Bonn Declaration has been adopted by the High-Level segment of ICCM5 in order to generate the necessary political support at all levels and in all relevant institutions for the sound management of chemicals and waste.

The Declaration recognises that the sound management of chemicals and waste is essential to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Chemical pollution jeopardizes sustainable development; the market and non-market cost of inaction could be as high as 10 per cent of the global gross domestic product.

¹ https://staging.saicm.org/sites/default/files/documents/2319030E_v2_20231117.pdf

It underlines that the crises of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss are closely interrelated and need to be addressed in an integrated manner since the sound management of chemicals and waste will significantly contribute to the Paris Agreement climate objectives, and the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and thereby assure the long-term integrity of vital ecosystem services and their productive capacity.

The signatories commit to prevent exposure to harmful chemicals, and phase out the most harmful ones, where appropriate, and enhance the safe management of such chemicals where they are needed. They promise to actively promote and support transitions to circular economies, including through the development of safe chemical and non-chemical alternatives and substitutes, including by actively promoting research and innovation for the development of safe and sustainable chemicals.

Moreover, the signatories commit to strengthening capacity building, technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, and financial support, including from domestic sources, regional and international development cooperation and assistance, as well as from the private sector and philanthropy.

Finally, the signatories commit in a spirit of solidarity and partnership to implement the Global Framework on Chemicals – For a planet free of harm from chemicals and waste, to increase global ambition and action, including:

- Protecting and respecting human rights for the benefit of present and future generations;
- Developing and adopting the necessary national chemicals and waste frameworks, strategies, legislation, and action plans to improve the management and control of pollution from chemicals and waste;

- Enhancing national action that supports the implementation and complements the achievement of other existing relevant chemicals and waste related United Nations multilateral agreements, standards and commitments;
- Enhancing the safe production of food, feed, and fibre, by preventing, or where not feasible minimizing the adverse impacts of pesticides on health and the environment;
- Protecting human health, particularly of women and children, with special attention to early childhood;
- Promoting decent, safe, healthy and sustainable work throughout value and supply chains;
- Strengthening the development and provision of safe and sustainable chemicals with reduced adverse impacts for downstream industry users, workers, and consumers;
- Enhancing cooperation to combat the continued illegal traffic of hazardous chemicals and waste.

Assessment of the achievements and next steps

The results of ICCM5 bring major developments in global chemicals management: The Global Framework on Chemicals achieved will give structure, aim and objectives to the work done at national, regional and international level in all relevant sectors and by all relevant stakeholders, as well as channel important quantities of resources, to improving the management of chemicals and waste worldwide. The agreement on 28 targets will facilitate monitoring of the progress in sound management of chemicals.

ICCM5 adopted a number of resolutions that kicked-off the work on many activities or prepared the ground for work to be done intersessionally with the aim to finalise that work by adopting respective resolutions at the first International Conference (IC1). Therefore, the work to prepare IC1 and the conference itself are extremely important for many elements of the GFC, in particular the issues of concern, the implementation programmes and the measurability structure.

As a part of the follow-up, a major milestone will be addressing chemicals at UNEA-6 in the context of a dedicated resolution which would address the achievements of ICCM5 and provide for ensuring a secretarial support to the GFC.

The EU achieved important results as the EU's own objectives and priorities for the management of chemicals and waste are reflected and taken up at the global level. The alignment of the Global Framework on Chemicals with many elements of the internal EU policies, in particular the Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability, will allow the EU to scale up its regional solutions at the global level. This will allow the EU to showcase its leadership in this policy area, with the ultimate objective of achieving a higher level of protection of human health and the environment worldwide, which will come hand in hand with business opportunities allowing the EU chemicals industry to pioneer solutions for safe and sustainable chemicals.

