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Items 4 (c) of the provisional agenda*

**International environmental policy and governance
issues: chemicals and waste**

**Recent activities to support implementation of the chemicals
and waste dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable
Development**

Note by the Executive Director

Summary

Pursuant to parts I and III of resolution 1/5 of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), on chemicals and waste, the present information note describes recent activities organized by UNEP with partners to support implementation of the chemicals and waste dimension of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

* UNEP/EA.2/1.

I. Introduction

1. In part I of its resolution 1/5, the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) recognized the continued relevance of the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020. In part III of that resolution, the Environment Assembly emphasized that the sound management of chemicals and waste was an essential and integral cross-cutting element of sustainable development and was of great relevance to the sustainable development agenda. Already, in its decision 27/12, the Governing Council had requested UNEP to continue work on the *Global Chemicals Outlook* report.
2. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals, their recognition of the importance of sound management of chemicals for sustainable development, the outcome of the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management and its decision to advance a post-2020 agenda for the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) have created a window of opportunity in which to explore the future of global chemicals management in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
3. In the above context, UNEP convened the following events:
 - (a) Meeting of the Bureau of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, held on 16 and 17 March 2016;
 - (b) International Expert and Stakeholder Workshop on the Integrated National Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and International Chemicals and Waste Agreements, held from 11 to 13 April 2016;
 - (c) Consultative meeting for the preparation of the second edition of the *Global Chemicals Outlook*, held on 13 and 14 April 2016.
4. The present information note provides a brief summary of the three events, together with a short description of the intersessional approach for post-2020 discussions under the SAICM.

II. Sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020

5. The Bureau of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management met in Jordan on 16 and 17 March 2016, immediately after the seventh session of the intergovernmental negotiating committee to prepare a global legally binding instrument on mercury. The Bureau, which is composed of one Bureau member per United Nations region, advises on the conduct of the business of the Conference and its subsidiary bodies. Representatives of non-governmental participants from health, industry, trade union and public interest groups, the chair of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals and regional focal points also take part in Bureau meetings. With the deadline for the 2020 goal of SAICM only four years away, the timeframe is unique for the mandate of the Bureau of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, as there is both a need for urgent action to achieve the 2020 goal and an opportunity to consider SAICM and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.
6. An intersessional process was initiated at the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management to prepare recommendations regarding SAICM and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020. The intersessional process, open to all stakeholders, will include, in principle, three meetings. The Bureau of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management decided at its meeting in Jordan that the first meeting of the intersessional process would take place from 7 to 9 February 2017. The schedule for the other meetings will be set at the first meeting of the intersessional process. The SAICM secretariat will issue a call for participation in the intersessional process during the second half of 2016.
7. In supporting the intersessional process, the SAICM secretariat has initiated an independent evaluation of SAICM for 2006 to 2015 in accordance with the terms of reference set out in the annex to resolution IV/4 of the International Conference on Chemicals Management. The aim of the evaluation is to provide information for participants in the intersessional process to develop recommendations and for participants in the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management to take an informed decision on future arrangements for SAICM and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020. Participants in the intersessional process will also consider the need for and develop recommendations regarding measurable objectives in support of the 2030 Agenda.

III. International Expert and Stakeholder Workshop on the Integrated National Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and International Chemicals and Waste Agreements

A. Introduction and background

8. From 11 to 13 April 2016, more than 70 international experts participated in the International Expert and Stakeholder Workshop on the Integrated National Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and International Chemicals and Waste Agreements, held in Geneva. The workshop was organized by the Chemicals and Waste Branch of the Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, UNEP (including the SAICM secretariat and the interim secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury), the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals. Core support was provided by the Federal Office for the Environment of Switzerland and through contributions provided to UNEP from the Governments of Sweden and Norway.

9. Participants came from all United Nations regions and a diverse range of sectors, representing 23 countries, 1 regional economic integration organization, 13 civil society organizations, 8 private-sector organizations and 13 intergovernmental organizations.

10. The workshop engaged experts and stakeholders in an interactive and collaborative manner in order to advance analysis and action to strengthen national implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals from a chemicals and waste management perspective. The overall objective of the workshop was to advance analysis, common understanding, commitment and action to integrate the sound management of chemicals and waste into national implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals and development planning.

11. A summary report has been shared with participants for their comments. The full workshop report is available on the UNEP website.

B. Key outcomes

1. Sound management of chemicals and waste and Sustainable Development Goals: strategic linkages

12. By reiterating the fundamental link between sound management of chemicals and waste and the economic, environmental and social development agenda, the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals create renewed momentum to mainstream and prioritize sound management of chemicals and waste at the national level and to implement international chemicals and waste agreements.

13. A major challenge is to nurture a new way of thinking and a change in attitude at all levels in order to move away from a silo approach and address chemicals and waste issues in an integrated way as part of a broader development agenda. Reaching out to key decision makers and change agents and engaging in innovative partnerships and pilot initiatives is critical in the process to create positive momentum. For sound management of chemicals and waste, that requires integrating the topic into national planning priorities and strategies. In some countries the process is already well advanced and is creating opportunities for knowledge-sharing collaboration.

14. The Sustainable Development Goals also help to explore solutions to achieve broader development objectives and place sound management of chemicals and waste within that context. Implementation of sound management of chemicals and waste in a sustainable development context requires a long-term, multisectoral and multi-stakeholder approach, drawing on existing institutions. Many Governments, the private sector and civil society organizations are aware of the need for a strategic transition and have already taken steps in that direction.

2. Analysis of specific Sustainable Development Goals

15. Given that chemicals and waste affect almost all aspects of development, the Sustainable Development Goals are linked to, and their full implementation depends on, the sound management of chemicals and waste. Sound management of chemicals and waste is a specific target under Goal 12, on sustainable consumption and production, and is also referred to under Goal 3, on good health and well-being, and Goal 6, on clean water and sanitation. The reverse side of the interface between the Sustainable Development Goals and sound management of chemicals and waste is equally important:

some Goals (such as Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions) help to create an enabling environment that could support the minimization of the adverse effects of chemicals and waste.

16. During the workshop, participants examined specific Goals from a chemicals and waste management perspective. Dedicated panels and working groups explored Goal 1, on the elimination of poverty; Goal 2, on zero hunger; Goal 3, on good health and well-being; Goal 5, on gender equality; Goal 9, on industry, innovation and infrastructure; Goal 12, on responsible consumption and production; and Goal 13, on climate action. The other Goals, which were also discussed, are equally relevant from the perspective of sound management of chemicals and waste and will be examined in more depth as a follow-up to the workshop.

3. Cross-cutting issues to advance integrated approaches

17. Participants examined the following cross-cutting issues considered critical for the successful integration of sound management of chemicals and waste into the Goals: strengthening institutions; inclusion, accountability and access to justice; economic analysis and incentives; and strengthening communication.

18. Existing national institutional structures do not necessarily match how the Goals are organized, and any action to implement the Goals needs to take those structures into account. The three interlinked and mutually supporting pillars of the integrated approach to financing for the sound management of chemicals and waste – mainstreaming, industry involvement and dedicated external financing – remain relevant in a Goals context.

19. Ensuring inclusion, accountability and access to justice is critical for protecting vulnerable populations from exposure to hazardous chemicals and waste. Those issues, essential for the sound management of chemicals and waste, also cut across the Goals, meaning that progress in establishing such support structures will deliver multifaceted benefits.

20. The benefits of regulating chemicals far outweigh the costs; the difficulty lies in quantifying those benefits. Further development of economic tools and analysis (e.g., to quantify the cost of inaction) are therefore critical in convincing decision makers of the benefits of sound management of chemicals and waste.

4. Linking Sustainable Development Goal indicators with chemicals and waste indicators

21. The workshop explored the interface between Goal indicators, indicators deriving from international chemicals and waste agreements, and indicators used by countries to assess their progress in achieving the 2020 goal of sound management of chemicals and waste.

22. Participants agreed on the importance of global indicators for sound management of chemicals and waste that fed into the Goals. Additional efforts may be needed to address any gaps in the international indicators for measuring the 2020 goal. The basic elements agreed on under SAICM, as well as the indicators developed by the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, could be considered.

23. More work is needed to help countries develop more specific benchmarks for assessing their progress on specific instruments considered of universal value, such as the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals. A suite of indicators that can be adapted to national needs and serve national purposes would allow countries to choose indicators tailored to their specific needs, priorities and national circumstances.

5. Scaling up integrated and innovative approaches

24. A number of innovative approaches and initiatives implemented by Governments, the private sector and civil society that already successfully integrate the social, economic and environmental pillars were discussed during the workshop. Such initiatives need to be scaled up and replicated. New integrated approaches would not mean that countries renounce efforts to develop and strengthen their national chemicals and waste management programmes. In fact, such programmes can support and feed into the Sustainable Development Goals and sectoral implementation.

25. The chemical industry is a key player in advancing innovation and providing safer chemicals to downstream users and markets, and innovative solutions may include a shift to providing broader services, such as chemical leasing. Following a holistic approach, sustainable chemistry can make a major contribution to sound management of chemicals and waste and the achievement of the Goals. As a major user of chemicals, the downstream industry is equally important given its closeness to the market and its major role in creating demand for cleaner products. Both industries need to be included in international and national dialogues and initiatives. Changes in consumer behaviour, including through incentive structures, can also be an important driver of change towards sound management of

chemicals and waste, in particular by minimizing waste generation and reducing the demand for products containing toxic chemicals.

6. Communication and knowledge-sharing

26. There is broad recognition of the importance of better communicating chemicals and waste issues to decision makers and change agents at the international and national levels. There is a need to develop an overarching communication strategy for chemicals and waste with a new narrative relating to the Sustainable Development Goals and that speaks to those who are not engaged in technical chemicals and waste issues.

27. A knowledge-sharing process is needed, including on the use of economic instruments, institutional strengthening, and mainstreaming of sound management of chemicals and waste into national development agendas. Available information and tools relevant for the sound management of chemicals and waste should be consolidated and communicated effectively, ensuring that it is readable and usable by the target audience.

7. Adjusting partnerships and development cooperation

28. A number of development partners are shifting their resource allocation towards more integrated approaches and solutions with environmental, economic and social benefits. Intergovernmental organizations are responding by mainstreaming the Goals into their programme of work, thereby including key elements of sound management of chemicals and waste. This requires programmes and projects to be designed in a more holistic manner, taking into account all dimensions of sustainable development.

29. The Goals provide an opportunity to focus and guide development work in the area of sound management of chemicals and waste. The broader scope of the Goals offers an opportunity to address the root causes beyond chemicals and waste issues, considering social, economic and financial aspects of development, and to set a higher level of ambition.

30. Partnerships are essential to achieving the Goals and the sound management of chemicals and waste. In securing a critical mass, open and broad multisectoral and multi-stakeholder approaches at all levels are essential and will stimulate participation. Partnerships should complement and reinforce a robust regulatory framework, rather than serving as an alternative. They can help to implement relevant obligations but cannot shift relevant responsibilities, and they are most effective if they have clearly defined goals and transparent operations. Actors across the value chain should be included.

C. Conclusion and follow-up

31. UNEP plans to use the momentum generated by the workshop to work with partners in considering and implementing follow-up activities. Specifically, opportunities for knowledge creation, exchange and management will be explored, starting with a collection of innovative approaches undertaken by countries and stakeholders that demonstrate integrated approaches of sound management of chemicals and waste in a sustainable development context. In addition, opportunities exist to hold more specific workshops and initiate pilot projects with interested regions and countries to capture, catalyse and share innovative action. With regard to communication, development of factsheets exploring the linkages between each Goal and chemicals and waste will be initiated.

IV. Consultative meeting for the preparation of the second edition of *Global Chemicals Outlook* – taking stock and exploring the future of chemicals management in a sustainable development context

A. Introduction and background

32. The first edition of *Global Chemicals Outlook* was published in February 2013 as the first comprehensive global overview of issues and challenges related to the sound management of chemicals. It assessed the status of health, environmental, economic and institutional factors related to the production, use and disposal of chemicals, with a focus on issues relevant to developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

33. The twenty-seventh session of the Governing Council/Global Ministerial Environment Forum, held in Nairobi from 18 to 22 February 2013, recognized the significance of the findings and recommendations of the *Global Chemicals Outlook*. The Governing Council requested UNEP to continue its work on the report, particularly in areas where data were found to be lacking or inadequate, and to enhance transparency through regionally balanced stakeholder involvement with a view to developing a tool for assessing progress towards the achievement of the sound management of

chemicals and hazardous waste, including the existing 2020 goal, taking into account and building on other existing information.

34. In response to the request of the Governing Council, UNEP has begun work on the second edition of *Global Chemicals Outlook*. As a first step, UNEP convened a consultative meeting, held in Geneva on 13 and 14 April 2016, to discuss and provide advice on the development of the second edition. The consultative meeting was regionally balanced and multisectoral and was attended by experts from Governments, intergovernmental organizations, the private sector, civil society organizations and academia. The meeting gathered some 70 participants, including 27 representatives of Governments (15 from developed countries and 12 from developing countries), 25 representatives from the private sector and non-governmental organizations and 14 representatives of intergovernmental organizations.

35. Specific objectives of the consultation included reviewing the trends affecting international chemicals management that were relevant for updating the first edition of *Global Chemicals Outlook*; identifying topics relevant for chemicals management until and beyond 2020 and meriting thematic review; providing input to the development of terms of reference for thematic review papers; advising on modalities and procedures for preparing the second edition, including its regional dimension; and identifying linkages with, and opportunities to feed into, the beyond-2020 process of SAICM.

36. The meeting was organized around five sessions. Session 1 introduced the proposed objectives of the second edition of *Global Chemicals Outlook* and its contribution to discussions on the implementation of the 2020 goal and beyond, and to chemicals management within the context of the 2030 Agenda. Session 2 provided initial feedback on the draft outline of the second edition and the topics selected for thematic review. Session 3 focused on the process and on thematic review papers. Session 4 provided feedback on the proposed process and timeline for preparing the second edition. Session 5 focused on follow-up actions. The report of the meeting is available on the UNEP website.

37. Recognizing the importance of the relationship between chemicals products and waste and the impact of chemicals at all stages of the product life cycle, a discussion was held via Skype with the Director of the International Environmental Technology Centre, Division of Technology, Industry and Economics, UNEP, to examine potential linkages between the *Global Chemicals Outlook* and *Global Waste Management Outlook* exercises.

B. Key outcomes

38. The adoption of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals and the recognition of the importance of sound chemicals management for sustainable development, together with the outcome of the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management to initiate discussions on the future of SAICM and chemicals and waste management beyond 2020, have created a window of opportunity to inform, through scientific analysis, the future of chemicals management within the 2030 Agenda. Designed to be forward-looking and policy-relevant, the second edition of *Global Chemicals Outlook* is expected to capture the state of scientific, management and policy knowledge in order to support policymakers and stakeholders in assessing the implementation of the 2020 goal and in deliberating on the sound and sustainable management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

39. Participants welcomed the UNEP initiative to continue its work on *Global Chemicals Outlook* and expressed their support for building on the first edition and filling its data gaps while maintaining a forward-looking approach and being policy-relevant.

40. Appreciation was expressed for the proposed structure of the second edition and the use of back-casting as an analytical tool and planning method. Back-casting starts with defining a goal and then explores actions that need to be taken to attain that goal.

41. In discussing the back-casting method, the consultation recognized a need to work further on the vision and time horizon of the second edition of *Global Chemicals Outlook*. Its starting point was the vision developed through the country-led consultative process on enhancing cooperation and coordination within the chemicals and waste cluster (UNEP/EA.1/5/Add.2), namely “to achieve the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle and of hazardous wastes in ways that lead to the prevention or minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment, as an essential contribution to the three dimensions of sustainable development”. Also relevant is the UNEP medium-term strategy, which uses the year 2030 as a reference point for achieving measurable impacts reducing the adverse effects of chemicals and waste. Finally, investment cycles in the industry, which usually cover 15 to 20 years, will need to be taken into account. The beyond-2020 and medium-term horizon used by the second edition of *Global Chemicals Outlook* for analysis needs to be contrasted with the vision and timelines of the document itself, which seeks to provide sound

scientific analysis and insights to inform the deliberations that the Open-ended Working Group of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management intends to hold in 2018 to discuss an approach for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

42. The proposed structure of the second edition of *Global Chemicals Outlook* divides the document into three complementary building blocks:

- (a) Part I: Global context, trends and developments
- (b) Part II: Review of chemical management areas of relevance until and beyond 2020
- (c) Part III: Policy measures and action for creating an enabling environment

43. Part I will provide updated scientific data and evidence related to the global context, trends and developments relevant for chemicals and waste management. It will include an analysis of recent international policy agreements, such as the 2030 Agenda and Paris Agreement, as well as policy and management concepts and initiatives relevant for the management of chemicals, such as sustainable consumption and production. It will also seek to shed light on the dynamics of the chemicals production and consumption system, changes and trends in demographics and consumer behaviour, and the composition and structure of the industry, including related global value chains and trade of chemicals and products containing chemicals. Part I will also update data on trends in markets, production and consumption, chemicals releases and waste, and environmental, health and social effects.

44. Part II will provide the latest knowledge on, and assess key chemicals management topics considered relevant for, the implementation of the 2020 goal and beyond. Consistent with and taking into account the overall orientation and guidance for achieving the 2020 goal of sound management of chemicals (see SAICM/ICCM.4/6), Part II covers topics such as the state of classification, labelling and chemical safety information; chemicals risk assessment and management: review of initiatives to identify chemicals of emerging concern; greening research and development; and the interface between chemicals, pollution and waste. For key topics included in Part II, in-depth thematic review papers will be commissioned in 2016 and 2017 as a basis for generating policy insights. Discussions are ongoing to ensure that thematic review papers are published in a scientific journal.

45. Part III focuses on the policy, institutional and economic conditions necessary to provide an enabling environment. It will review the state of chemical policies, legislation and regulatory infrastructures and assess their achievements, efficiency and effectiveness in responding to the trends and challenges covered in Part I and Part II. Part III will give attention to fiscal incentives, innovative financing and business models, and social entrepreneurship and innovation. It will also address the question of capacity development and effective partnership. Finally, it will assess the state of indicators and the review mechanism to measure progress in the sound management of chemicals until and beyond 2020.

46. Participants provided specific comments on the three proposed parts and suggested several additional themes and topics to enhance the work's comprehensiveness, credibility and legitimacy. Working groups were established to discuss specific aspects of the outline.

47. Participants provided feedback concerning governance and implementation arrangements, including the criteria for selecting a steering committee balanced with regard to regional and sectoral distribution, gender representation and competences and skills, to be established by June 2016. The steering committee will provide oversight and advice concerning the second edition of the *Global Chemicals Outlook* on the basis of clear terms of reference.

48. Regional perspectives will be considered throughout the preparation of the thematic review papers. Regions will also have the opportunity to provide insights on their priorities related to the chemical management topics examined by the second edition of *Global Chemicals Outlook*.

49. Considering the multidisciplinary and multisectoral scope of the second edition, close collaboration will be developed with organizations belonging to the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, many of which participated in the consultation. Given existing work – for example, by the World Health Organization – on health effects, emphasis will be placed on ensuring that the second edition of the report creates complementary knowledge while referring to existing knowledge as appropriate.

50. As the second edition of *Global Chemicals Outlook* is meant to be policy-relevant, participants also discussed the need to develop a robust communication strategy. A number of recommendations were made, including the need for a dedicated website, press releases and the like. In that regard, the

experience of communication experts from the private and public sectors, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and regional offices should be utilized.

C. Next steps and follow-up

51. The following table shows the expected schedule for developing the second edition of *Global Chemicals Outlook*, including coordination with the intersessional process on SAICM and sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

	June 2016	Dec. 2016	Jan.–June 2017	July–Dec. 2017	Jan.–June 2018	July–Dec. 2018
Milestones of preparation of the second edition of <i>Global Chemicals Outlook</i>	Steering committee established	Six thematic review papers completed	Six additional thematic review papers completed	Final six thematic review papers completed	<i>Global Chemicals Outlook</i> workshop/consultation <i>Global Chemicals Outlook</i> summary report developed	Submission of summary report to Open-ended Working Group
SAICM and beyond-2020 process milestones	SAICM evaluation initiated		First intersessional beyond-2020 meeting, Feb. 2017		Second intersessional beyond-2020 meeting, Feb. 2018 (to be confirmed)	Open-ended Working Group beyond-2020 meeting, Nov./ Dec. 2018 (to be confirmed)

V. Overall conclusions

52. A window of opportunity exists between 2016 and 2018 to undertake sound scientific analysis and generate policy insights to feed into the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the intersessional process initiated under SAICM. The three events organized by UNEP and discussed here have demonstrated the interest in and commitment of Governments and other stakeholders to engaging actively in international activities in order to explore the future of sound chemicals and waste management in a sustainable development context. Within its mandate, and working closely with international, national and stakeholder partners, UNEP is ready and committed to carrying out further actions, as appropriate. Governments and other stakeholders in a position to contribute financial and other resources are encouraged to do so to enable the secretariat to perform its mandated functions. All potential donors are invited to consider how they might support these efforts. In addition, countries interested in hosting one of the meetings of the SAICM intersessional process are invited to indicate their interest.