**The Intersessional Process for Considering SAICM and the Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste Beyond 2020**

**Health Sector Background Note**

Prepared by the World Health Organization

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**Introduction**

The engagement of all relevant sectors and stakeholders in governments, inter-governmental and non-governmental organizations is vital to achieve the sound management of chemicals. The health sector is central to this given its key roles and responsibilities. Recognizing this, in 2016, the World Health Assembly (WHA) adopted [Resolution 69.4 (WHA69.4)](http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA69/A69_R4-en.pdf?ua=1)[[1]](#footnote-1) entitled: *The role of the health sector in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management towards 2020 and beyond*. The following year, the 70th WHA approved the [*Road map to enhance health sector engagement in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management towards the 2020 goal and beyond*](https://www.who.int/health-topics/chemical-safety#tab=tab_3)*[[2]](#footnote-2)* (the road map) requested by WHA69.4.

During WHA discussions on resolution WHA69.4 and on the road map, many Member States have highlighted the importance of the health sector role in the sound management of chemicals and of the work of the WHO Secretariat in supporting Member States in this regard.

The [Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management](http://www.saim.org)[[3]](#footnote-3) (SAICM) is a voluntary international policy framework to foster the sound management of chemicals worldwide and, specifically, to support multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder efforts toward the goal agreed to at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development that, *by the year 2020, chemicals are produced and used in ways that minimize significant adverse impacts on the environment and human health*. Implementation of SAICM is overseen by the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM).

At its fourth session in 2015 the ICCM decided to initiate an intersessional process to prepare recommendations on SAICM and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 (the intersessional process). The outcome of the intersessional process will be presented at ICCM’s fifth session (ICCM5), scheduled for 5-9 July 2021, in Bonn, Germany.

Of particular significance for the health sector is ensuring that the recommendations for the future meet the needs of the health sector, in particular:

* inclusion and emphasis placed on health priorities
* inclusion of the health sector in arrangements for decision-making/governance, and
* support for health sector engagement and implementation.

**The Intersessional Process:**

The mandate for the intersessional process is set out in SAICM ICCM 4 **resolution IV/4**. To date, the intersessional process has included three meetings (IP1, IP2, and IP3), as follows:

* IP1: 7-9 February, 2017 in Brasilia, Brazil
* IP2: 13-15 March, 2018 in Stockholm, Sweden
* IP3: 1-4 October 2019 in Thailand, Bangkok.

IP4 is tentatively scheduled for March 2021, Romania, however confirmation depends upon the COVID-19 situation.

Key outcomes from IP3 included:

* **Governance:** Text related to the operations of the ICCM, the bureau and the secretariat were discussed as well as mechanisms for enhancing multisectoral and multistakeholder engagement.
* **Targets and milestones:** There was some progress in working towards agreement on text for various targets but little time to discuss milestones. Further work was agreed to be done in advance of IP4 through a Technical Working Group.
* **Mechanisms for implementation:** Participants discussed the criteria and process for selecting “issues of concern” with some progress in creating new proposed text. The need to strengthen the science policy interface was also discussed but there was no consensus on approach. The group ran out of time to discuss approach to updating the text in the future or how to report on progress.
* **Finance:** Proposals for enhanced funding mechanisms, including the possibilities of a dedicated fund for developing countries and voluntary assessed contributions to fund the secretariat, were discussed.

**Background on Health Sector engagement in the Intersessional Process**

Representatives from Ministries of Health from around the world as well as from many health-focussed civil society organisations have participated actively in the intersessional process. At each IP meeting and during OEWG3[[4]](#footnote-4), WHO has convened a side meeting for the health sector to share views on both the challenges faced by Health Ministries in engaging in SAICM to date, and how the health sector could further engage beyond 2020 including but not limited to implementation of the WHO Chemicals Road Map, and the development of health sector specific targets and milestones.

In addition, as mandated by the road map, the WHO Secretariat established the WHO Global Chemicals and Health Network to facilitate health sector implementation of the road map, which includes engagement in the intersessional process. As of October 2020, 75 Member States have joined the network. All are encouraged to join.

For OEWG3, WHO provided a report focusing on health sector progress [(SAICM/OEWG.3/INF/26)](http://www.saicm.org/Portals/12/Documents/meetings/OEWG3/inf/OEWG3-INF-26-health-strategy-.pdf)[[5]](#footnote-5) and a report on the WHO Chemicals Road Map and Global Chemicals and Health Network ([SAICM/OEWG.3/INF/10](http://www.saicm.org/Portals/12/Documents/meetings/OEWG3/inf/OEWG3-INF-10-WHO-Road-map-Network-.pdf)[[6]](#footnote-6)). Following OEWG3, WHO consulted with the WHO Global Chemicals and Health Network to develop a document on “additional measures to achieve multisectoral engagement” and submitted the document to the SAICM Secretariat[[7]](#footnote-7).

The proposals in the WHO submission on multi-sectoral engagement provide a range of suggestions, including:

* Themed discussions on sectoral subjects of interest during meetings would provide further rationale for increased sectoral attendance.
* Inclusion of the IOMC organizations’ logos on SAICM meeting invitations, rather than only the UNEP logo, could make it easier for sectors other than environment to get approval to participate, including with their own resources.

**IP3 Health Sector meeting**

The health sector meeting convened by WHO at IP3 was attended by approximately sixty SAICM health-sector stakeholders, including ministries of health, non-governmental organizations, intergovernmental organizations, industry and academia. It was also attended by colleagues from other sectors. The meeting focused on health sector perspectives on the IP co-chairs paper on multi-sectoral engagement (SAICM/IP.3/3) and the relevance of proposed indicators and milestones.

Participants noted the following:

* Availability of formal “sectoral space” during IP3 provided important time for discussion and networking. Such practices during SAICM meetings should continue.
* The IOMC is useful in bringing the sectors together, including at the national and regional levels.
* The WHO Chemicals Road Map has proven a useful approach to improving sectoral engagement and this is enhanced by the WHO Global Chemicals and Health Network.
* Ministries of Health lead various aspects of chemicals regulation in many countries, for example on drinking water, air quality, food safety, and in some countries also industrial chemicals and pesticides. Other important roles include health impact assessments, e.g. on contaminated sites.
* Information on the health impacts of chemicals and on issues of food safety can help attract political attention to chemicals management.
* Having targets and indicators relevant to the health sector is important for encouraging health sector participation in the work beyond 2020. This could include an indicator for sectoral participation in SAICM bodies and events and an indicator on sectoral access to support for implementation of SAICM, e.g. through any financial arrangements.
* The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide the big picture for countries in terms of targets and indicators.
* Existing WHO data sources on health impact and burden of disease were identified, including several where WHO is a custodial agency under the SDGs. For example, the core capacities of the International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR) for chemical-related incidents and emergencies is monitored by WHO and achievement of the IHR capacities is also SDG indicator 3d. IHR capacity also presents a number of opportunities for cooperation between health, environment and other stakeholders since it encompasses a range of aspects such as chemical regulation, availability of poisons centres, development of laboratory capacity and multi-sectoral coordination.

**Post IP3 work on specific issues:**

* **Technical Working Group on targets, indicators and milestones**

IP3 requested that a Technical Working Group be tasked to advance work on targets, indicators and milestones in preparation for the fourth meeting of the intersessional process. This group deliberated through two e-meetings held January 10 and February 3rd, 2020 and one face to face meeting held February 13-14 in Geneva. The outcome of the Technical Working group can be found in: [SAICM/IP.4/3](http://www.saicm.org/Portals/12/documents/meetings/IP4/Docs/SAICM_IP4_3_Proposed-targets-TWG-SAICM-smcw-beyond-2020.pdf)[[8]](#footnote-8) Proposed targets prepared by the Technical Working Group on targets, indicators and milestones for SAICM and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020. Supplemental information can be found in: [SAICM/IP.4/INF/15](http://www.saicm.org/Portals/12/documents/meetings/IP4/INF/SAICM_IP4_INF_15_TWG_FINAL.pdf)[[9]](#footnote-9).

**The second Workshop on strengthening governance** **for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020** was hosted by UNITARin Frankfurt, Germany 14-16 January, 2020 supported by the Governments of Germany, Norway, and Switzerland. The workshop provided participants with an opportunity to consider progress to date on governance matters and to share views on priority areas. The report from this workshop can be found in: [SAICM/IP.4/INF/6](http://www.saicm.org/Portals/12/documents/meetings/IP4/INF/SAICM_IP4_INF_6.pdf)[[10]](#footnote-10) Submission from UNITAR: Summary document of the stakeholder workshop on strengthening governance for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

* **An Informal Technical Expert Workshop on Criteria for Substances of International Concern Beyond 2020** was held February 24-25, 2020, Gothenburg, Sweden arranged by UNITAR in collaboration with University of Gothenburg, Centre for Future Chemical Risk Assessment and Management Strategies (FRAM) and the Swedish Chemicals Agency (KemI). The report from this workshop is available on the IP4 website[[11]](#footnote-11).

**Moving Forward**

While IP4 is not confirmed due to the COVID-19 outbreak, work in the meantime will continue through a series of virtual working groups, as follows:

* Targets, indicators and milestones
* Governance and mechanisms to support implementaton
* Issues of concern; and
* Financial considerstions.

Many useful documents have been prepared and can be found on the SAICM website ([www.saicm.org](http://www.saicm.org)). In particular, the results of discussions to date are presented in **SAICM/IP4/2: *Compilation of recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020*** (the compilation document). In summary, issues that have been discussed but need to be finalized with recommended text include:

* Vision
* Scope
* Principles and Approaches
* Strategic objectives
* Targets and indicators and milestones
* Institutional arrangements and mechanisms to support implementation
* Financial considerations
* Potential name for a new instrument

In addition, the following issues have not yet been discussed:

* Taking stock of progress/reporting;
* How to update the ‘instrument’ over time;
* Mechanisms for capacity building
* Mechanisms to address any gaps within the Science Policy interface

During the next phase of the intersessional work, health sector representatives may wish to focus their attention on:

* Improving multi-sector engagement;
* Inclusion of targets, indicators and milestones relevant to the health sector;
* Criteria for selecting issues of international concern or interest;
* Gaps that need to be filled in the science-policy interface that are relevant for health and ensuring the health sector is included in future approaches to bridge these gaps;
* Improved access to resources for the health sector for implementation beyond 2020.

**Other relevant WHO activities**

* WHO released an addendum to the WHO publication “[The Public Health Impact of Chemicals: Knowns and Unknowns](https://www.who.int/ipcs/publications/chemicals-public-health-impact/en/)” to provide [an update of the main data tables and figures for the year 2016](https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/279001/WHO-CED-PHE-EPE-18.09-eng.pdf?ua=1).
* A “[WHO global strategy on health, environment and climate change](http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA72/A72_15-en.pdf)” was noted by the Seventy-second World Health Assembly. The report provides information on a vision and way forward on the health response to environmental and climate change. The report notes that a wider intersectoral approach is needed to tackle the environmental determinants of health both at the global and local levels, with an increased focus on primary prevention rather than curative medicine.
* An update on progress in implementing the road map will be made to the 74th World Health Assembly, as well as a report on actions undertaken by the WHO Secretariat to update the road map in the light of the outcome of the Intersessional Process.
* In 2018 WHO released a report on “[Circular economy and health: opportunities and risks](http://www.euro.who.int/__data/assets/pdf_file/0004/374917/Circular-Economy_EN_WHO_web_august-2018.pdf?ua=1)” noting that there can be unintended adverse health effects in the transition to a circular economy. One of the key messages of the report is that health benefits and risks need to be better integrated into circular economy discussions and plans.

**Other relevant documents and activities:**

Below is a list of other global activities and recently released documents that may be of interest to network members.

[UNEP](https://www.unenvironment.org/explore-topics/chemicals-waste/what-we-do/policy-and-governance/global-chemicals-outlook) published the second edition of the [Global Chemicals Outlook (GCO II](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/28113/GCOII.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)) and an accompanying [summary for Policy Makers](https://papersmart.unon.org/resolution/uploads/k1900123.pdf#overlay-context=pre-session-unea-4) report. The Global Chemicals Outlook II has been prepared over the past three years through a process involving more than 400 scientists and experts around the world under the guidance of the Steering Committee of the Global Chemicals Outlook II with participation from all regions and a wide range of stakeholders.

United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) Declaration on Non-Communicable Diseases

Through UNGA Resolution [73/2: *Political declaration of the third high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the prevention and control of non-communicable diseases*](http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/73/2)*,* Heads of State and Government assembled at the United Nations on September 27, 2018 committed to:

32. Promote healthy communities by **addressing the impact of environmental determinants on non-communicable diseases, including air, water and soil pollution, exposure to chemicals, climate change and extreme weather events,** as well as the ways in which cities and human settlements are planned and developed, including sustainable transportation and urban safety, to promote physical activity, social integration and connectivity;

What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050 Report

In September 2018, the World Bank released a “[What a Waste 2.0: A Global Snapshot of Solid Waste Management to 2050](https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/30317)” report, noting that “Without urgent action, global waste will increase by 70 percent on current levels by 2050”.

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1. <http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA69/A69_R4-en.pdf?ua=1> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. https://www.who.int/health-topics/chemical-safety#tab=tab\_3 [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. www.saicm.org [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Third session of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG3) of SAICM held 6-9 April, 2019 in Montevideo, Uruguay [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. www.saicm.org/Portals/12/Documents/meetings/OEWG3/inf/OEWG3-INF-26-health-strategy-.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. www.saicm.org/Portals/12/Documents/meetings/OEWG3/inf/OEWG3-INF-10-WHO-Road-map-Network-.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. http://www.saicm.org/Portals/12/documents/meetings/IP3/Inputs/22\_WHO\_Proposed%20measures%20to%20ensure%20multisectoral%20engagement.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. www.saicm.org/Portals/12/documents/meetings/IP4/Docs/SAICM\_IP4\_3\_Proposed-targets-TWG-SAICM-smcw-beyond-2020.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. www.saicm.org/Portals/12/documents/meetings/IP4/INF/SAICM\_IP4\_INF\_15\_TWG\_FINAL.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. www.saicm.org/Portals/12/documents/meetings/IP4/INF/SAICM\_IP4\_INF\_6.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. http://www.saicm.org/Portals/12/documents/meetings/IP4/stakeholders/Submission\_UNITAR\_KEMI\_U\_Gothenburg.pdf [↑](#footnote-ref-11)