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PROCEDURE FOR CERTAIN HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS AND
PESTICIDES IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE

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Information Exchange Network on Capacity Building for the
Sound Management of Chemicals

Note by the secretariat

Annexed to the present note is an information paper on the Information Exchange Network on Capacity Building for the Sound Management of Chemicals (INFOCAP), submitted by the secretariat of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS). The information has been reproduced without any formal editing.

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Annex

Information paper on the Information Exchange Network on Capacity Building for the Sound Management of Chemicals (INFOCAP)

Submitted to the 9.INC/PIC by the IFCS Secretariat

I. Background on the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety:

The Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) is a non-institutional arrangement that provides analysis and reports on progress of governments, international organizations, intergovernmental bodies and non-governmental organizations (industry, public interest, science, labour) in achieving the environmentally sound management of chemicals, and that provides advice, guidance and makes recommendations.

The purpose of IFCS is to provide policy guidance with particular emphasis on regional and sub-regional cooperation. It aims to develop strategies in a coordinated and integrated manner and foster an understanding of the issues.

II. History of INFOCAP:

Discussions about the need for a coordinated approach to information exchange on chemicals management capacity building started in 1996. The IFCS, at its third session in October 2000, in Salvador da Bahia, Brazil, officially endorsed the development of an Information Exchange Network on Capacity Building for the Sound Management of Chemicals (INFOCAP) within the framework of the IFCS.

III. Purpose of this information paper:

As a capacity building network for chemicals management, INFOCAP is relevant to the activities of the POPs INC. The purpose of this paper is to inform participants of INC-6 about the history, objectives, capabilities and status of development of INFOCAP and several potential synergies with the Stockholm Convention.

IV. Description of INFOCAP:

1. Purpose and Goals:

INFOCAP is an information exchange network designed to enhance effective cooperation among countries and organizations that are providing and/or receiving assistance related to the sound management of chemicals. It covers a broader set of chemicals than the Stockholm Convention, and will provide access to information needed by countries and organizations to effectively manage all chemicals, including POPs. INFOCAP has the overall long-term goal to facilitate the systematic exchange and public accessibility of information and experiences that are relevant to planning, implementing, evaluating and coordinating capacity building projects for the sound management of chemicals.

INFOCAP also provides a general framework for ensuring linkages among global, regional and national capacity building activities, including those facilitated through the IFCS regional groups and in the context of international agreements, such as ILO Convention 170, the Rotterdam Convention, the Stockholm Convention, Basel Convention, Montreal Protocol and others.

INFOCAP offers an informal and flexible means to exchange information. It operates primarily, but not exclusively, as an Internet site. For users without Internet, information is sent out in other appropriate formats. INFOCAP can help facilitate linkages between the identified capacity building needs of countries or organizations and the expertise and potential resources of various organizations. It is however not a granting or funding mechanism, and does not actively link those seeking assistance with those providing potential assistance.

2. *Main Benefits:*

The main benefits of INFOCAP are enhanced cooperation, support for decision-making, prevention of duplication and easy access to information in several languages.

3. *Characteristics:*

Key characteristics of the network include that it is driven by the needs of countries and organizations; builds on existing information; provides access to current information; is decentralized in structure and operation and is accessible via Internet to all governments and organizations as well as all interested individuals..

4. *Network Services:*

INFOCAP houses several different services, which are developed and maintained by sponsoring organizations. The services include:

- **National Profiles, Priorities, Plans of Action and Related Needs**

This service provides an opportunity for countries to make globally available, via the Internet, information about their national profiles, priorities, plans of action and resource needs relative to the sound management of chemicals.

- **Information on Sources of Potential Support**

This service provides information about means and official procedures to apply for and access potential support of organizations and countries providing assistance

- **Past, Ongoing and Planned Projects**

This service provides access to updated information on capacity building projects carried out by countries and organizations

- **Reference Library of Existing Training and Guidance Documents**

This service provides information and reference to existing documentation and training packages available through organizations and countries participating in the Network.

- **Network of Points of Contact**

This service provides up-to-date information about designated officials or offices relevant to the development and implementation of projects related to chemicals management capacity building.

5. *Development of INFOCAP:*

A Steering Group develops and maintains INFOCAP as an effective source of information for the sound management of chemicals. The Steering Group receives guidance from the Forum Standing Committee of the IFCS and follows the IFCS principles of involvement of, and partnerships among, governments, international organizations and non-governmental organizations to promote the sound management of chemicals in all countries. Membership is open to government and non-government stakeholders.

The IFCS Secretariat is the Central Coordinating Node (CCN) for the Network. The CCN, *inter alia*, oversees the development and implementation of the Network services and serves as the secretariat for the INFOCAP Steering Group.

V. Resources:

Currently, INFOCAP is run largely through in-kind contributions from sponsoring organizations and participants in the Steering Group. Countries and organizations in a position to do so are encouraged to provide resources to support the operation of INFOCAP, such as supporting the particular network services and/or direct financial contributions.

VI. Progress to date:

A draft web site is accessible on the Internet at <http://www.infocap.info>. The overall structure of the web site and the accompanying databases is almost complete. On 2-4 May 2002, the Steering Group had its first meeting to further develop the provisional terms of reference for INFOCAP and the Steering Group, and to design a work plan for the development and implementation of INFOCAP. Countries and organizations will be invited to start contributing information under the services within the next several months. The web site will be revised regularly to ensure that most up-to-date information is provided.

VII. INFOCAP and the Stockholm Convention:

The objectives of INFOCAP are broader than the Stockholm Convention in that it addresses all chemicals management issues. However, it may be useful as a tool to assist countries with locating relevant information for implementing the Convention.

Countries and organizations can access INFOCAP on the Internet or, if they do not have Internet access, can request information from INFOCAP to obtain information on chemical management priorities in other countries, potential sources of support, training and guidance information and past and on-going projects. This information may or may not include POPs-related information. Countries and organizations provide this information on a voluntary basis to INFOCAP, and every effort will be made to encourage entities to contribute regularly and comprehensively.

INFOCAP operates through the Central Coordinating Node, sponsoring organizations for the different information services and points of contact in countries and organizations involved with chemicals management.

VIII. Contact information:

For further information on INFOCAP, please contact:

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