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INTERIM CHEMICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

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USING REGIONAL WORKSHOPS AS A MEANS TO STRENGTHEN LINKS
BETWEEN THE NEEDS OF DESIGNATED NATIONAL AUTHORITIES AND
THE WORK OF THE INTERIM CHEMICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Note by the secretariat

1. The Secretariat has the honour to forward the attached note from the chair of the Interim Chemical Review Committee to the Committee.

NOTE FROM THE CHAIR OF THE INTERIM CHEMICAL REVIEW COMMITTEE

Using regional workshops as a means to strengthen links between the needs of Designated National Authorities (DNAs) with the work of the Interim Chemical Review Committee (ICRC) and Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC)

Background

The Bureau of the Interim Chemical Review Committee (ICRC) met in Geneva during the seventh session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC). In reviewing the outcome of the first session of the ICRC and the agenda for its second session it was thought that there was need to explore how the work of the ICRC might be better linked with the needs of designated national authorities (DNAs). The principal recipients of the work of the ICRC are DNAs. It was considered important by the Bureau that there be a clear mechanism for ensuring that the work of the Committee reflected the needs of DNAs and that there be a mechanism for obtaining feedback from DNAs on proposals developed by the Committee prior to their recommendations being sent to the INC for formal adoption. It was agreed that a brief thought starter would be prepared which would explore how communication between the Committee and DNAs might be improved with a particular focus on the sub-regional awareness raising workshops on the Rotterdam Convention.

As part of the process of bringing the voluntary PIC procedure in line with the Rotterdam Convention the Secretariat developed and distributed new versions of the forms for *the Notification of Final Regulatory Action to Ban or Severely Restrict a Chemical* and for *Importing Country Response* in June 1999. There has never been any follow-up with DNAs regarding their experience in using the forms. One result has been the request of the INC at its seventh session that the secretariat prepare an analysis of the problems frequently encountered by Parties in their preparation of notifications (paragraph 28 UNEP/FAO/PIC/INC.7/15). A preliminary version of the analysis has been made available to the Committee (UNEP/FAO/PIC/ICRC.2/9) in order that their input might be considered in developing any recommendations to the INC at its eighth session.

Current Status

Subregional workshops have been held in Bangkok Thailand (December 1998), Nairobi Kenya (June 2000) and Cartagena Columbia (October 2000). At the seventh session of the INC it was noted that a workshop for countries in the Pacific was tentatively scheduled for Brisbane Australia (April 2001). The Committee noted that a lack of resources prevented the convening of more such workshops in 2000. It expressed a wish that workshops would be organised in 2001 for countries of the Caribbean; countries of West Asia and the Middle East; French-speaking African countries; and countries of Central and Eastern Europe (paragraph 20; UNEP/FAO/INC.7/15).

The primary purpose of the three workshops convened to date has been to raise awareness regarding the Rotterdam Convention and to inform DNAs of the interim arrangements and what is required to operate the interim procedure. They have also served to clarify the role and responsibilities of DNAs, the interim secretariat and the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee. In each case representatives of countries in the sub-region were invited to make presentation on their experience in the operation of the PIC procedure and to identify issues associated with implementation at the national level. Copies of the workshop reports have been widely distributed and are available on the Rotterdam Convention Website at www.pic.int.

As the purpose of the workshops was to raise awareness of the Rotterdam Convention there has been little or no opportunity for seeking direct/technical feed back from DNAs on their experience in using the documents and forms developed for the implementation/operation of the interim PIC procedure. The ICRC is responsible for reviewing the notifications of control actions as the basis for making recommendations to the INC regarding the entry of chemicals into the PIC procedure. The decision guidance documents (DGDs)

produced by the ICRC are to be used by DNAs in making import decisions. The process for the development of the DGDs does provide opportunity for countries to provide technical comments on the document. However to date there would not appear to have been any concerted effort to define the information needs of DNAs in developing the operational procedures for the interim PIC procedure.

Points to Consider

At present it would appear that there is a danger of developing a top down approach to the operation/implementation of the interim PIC procedure. We are presently proposing revisions to the format of DGDs and analysing difficulties in the use of notification forms etc., without having directly sought input from the people that are expected to use the documents, DNAs. It is important that this input/feedback be sought as proposals are developed prior to their being circulated for official adoption/approval by the INC.

The information needs of DNAs in each of the 7 PIC regions may not be the same, similarly differences in cultural and social background will also influence how DNAs in the different regions handle or process information. None-the-less there is a need to ensure that the information produced by the ICRC in support of the operation of the interim PIC procedure is useful to DNAs in participating countries.

In preparing for meetings of the ICRC the experts should at a minimum be co-ordinating with their national DNA and where possible with other DNAs in their region. At the workshops convened in Nairobi and Cartagena the ICRC experts from the region were invited to participate. The participation of the members of the ICRC in these workshops provides an opportunity for them to meet and become more familiar with the needs of the DNAs in their region or sub-region.

Next Steps

1. The reports of the sub-regional workshops, including the presentations prepared by country participants should be reviewed by the ICRC experts from these regions for comments/proposals related to the practical experience of DNAs in using the documentation available for the operation of the interim PIC procedure. These comments/proposals should be consolidated and presented to the full meeting of the ICRC in order that they might be considered in the work of the Committee.
2. The agenda of the regional workshops should be amended to include a working session focussed on the technical documents used in the operation of the interim PIC procedure including the proposed revisions developed by the ICRC. This would include the PIC Circular, decision guidance documents, the forms for notification of control actions and import responses, documentation for the submission of proposals for hazardous pesticide formulations etc. The introduction of these practical work sessions could serve several purposes
 - a) increase the familiarity of the DNA with these documents and how they fit in the overall implementation of the PIC procedure
 - b) re-enforce the use of the PIC Circular as a primary source of information on the status of implementation of the PIC procedure
 - c) provide feedback on proposals developed by the ICRC for revised formats for DGDs, revisions to forms etc.,
 - d) provide an opportunity to obtain direct feedback on those aspects of the available documentation that present difficulties to DNAs (as per recommendation in paragraph 47 d) of UNEP/FAO/PIC/ICRC.1/6)
 - e) stimulate discussion among DNAs on problem identification and potential solutions in implementation of the interim PIC procedure in the sub-region, for example share experience in problems faced when deciding whether a national control action is a ban or severe restriction within the scope of the Convention

- f) provide basis for developing practical guidance to governments/DNAs on the operation/implementation of the PIC procedure (as per recommendation in paragraph 47 e) of UNEP/FAO/PIC/ICRC.1/6)
3. The representatives of the ICRC participating in the workshop should chair these working sessions, be responsible for preparing the relevant section of the workshop report and presenting their experience to the next session of the ICRC.
