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INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE FOR AN  
INTERNATIONAL LEGALLY BINDING INSTRUMENT FOR  
THE APPLICATION OF THE PRIOR INFORMED CONSENT  
PROCEDURE FOR CERTAIN HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS AND  
PESTICIDES IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE

Tenth session

Geneva, 17-21 November 2003

Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda\*

**Issues arising out of the conference of parties:  
Support for implementation**

**TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR SYNERGIES AS THE  
BASIS FOR A POSSIBLE STRATEGIC APPROACH TO TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE**

**Note by the secretariat**

1. At its ninth session, the Intergovernmental Committee requested the secretariat to prepare a report for the Committee at its tenth session on technical assistance needs and opportunities for synergies as the basis for a possible strategic approach to technical assistance.
2. At the same session, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee also agreed, based on the report of the secretariat, to discuss, at its tenth session, possible approaches that could lead to a “fast start” under article 16 once the Convention enters into force.

I. BACKGROUND

3. Article 16 on technical assistance reads as follows:

“The Parties shall, taking into account the particular needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition, cooperate in promoting technical assistance for the development of the infrastructure and the capacity necessary to manage chemicals to enable implementation of this Convention. Parties with more advanced programmes should provide technical

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\* UNEP/FAO/PIC/INC.10/1.

assistance, including training, to other Parties in developing their infrastructure and capacity to manage chemicals throughout their life-cycle.”

4. During the Conference of Plenipotentiaries in Rotterdam, and also at all sessions of the Committee since the Convention was adopted, the issue of assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition has been discussed. To date, much of the assistance during the interim period has been provided through workshops facilitated by the secretariat and by a number of bilateral technical assistance projects. The workshops facilitated by the secretariat are described in some detail in document UNEP/FAO/PIC/INC.10/21.

5. The workshops have identified a number of country needs where further technical assistance is required. These are identified in detail in document UNEP/FAO/PIC/INC.10/21, and include:

(a) Inadequate legal or regulatory infrastructure on chemicals to implement the provisions of the PIC procedure;

(b) Inadequate legal or regulatory infrastructure for control of industrial chemicals;

(c) Inadequate human and financial resources to implement the interim prior informed consent (PIC) procedure;

(d) Need for improved political support in ministries responsible for the implementation of the interim PIC procedure;

(e) Need for improved coordination and communication within and between relevant ministries and designated national authorities in implementing the interim PIC procedure;

(f) Need to improve or establish cooperation and communication between relevant ministries, designated national authorities and stakeholders in implementing the interim PIC procedure;

(g) Need for improved coordination at both the national and regional levels in implementing the Rotterdam Convention and other relevant conventions;

(h) Lack of capacity to undertake hazard and risk assessments on the effects of chemicals, including pesticides on human health and the environment;

(i) Poor reporting or collection of information on pesticide poisonings and a need for the establishment of poison control centres;

(j) Improved access to international literature, databases, risk/hazard evaluations and social and economic assessments of chemicals.

6. The workshops have been very helpful in raising awareness and assisting designated national authorities by providing general training. Once all countries have had an opportunity to participate in this first round, however, their continuation in their current structure may be of limited usefulness. While some of the identified needs may be addressed through more specialized training, it is clear that, to begin to address the full range of technical assistance needs articulated by countries, a broader and more comprehensive approach may be necessary.

## II. OPTIONS FOR MORE COMPREHENSIVE TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

7. There are a number of possible options that could be undertaken in order to address the technical assistance needs identified in paragraph 5 above. These could include, but are not necessarily limited to:

(a) Making further use of the capacity of UNEP and FAO to support countries at the regional level: Both UNEP and FAO have regional offices which could be called upon to provide direct assistance to countries in aspects of chemicals and pesticide safety relevant to the Convention. This could allow service delivery more closely tailored to the needs of countries in the regions, and would allow faster delivery. It could also leverage resources by integrating assistance relevant to the Rotterdam Convention with other, ongoing regional activities;

(b) Identifying opportunities to initiate and strengthen cooperation with regional and subregional groups involved in chemicals management activities. A number of organizations are active regionally, or with certain groups of countries, and may wish to engage their member countries more actively in work on issues relevant to the Rotterdam Convention. Some of these, such as the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN), the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the Alliance of Small Island States (AOSIS), have been involved to a greater or lesser extent in chemical safety issues, and may be willing to take Rotterdam Convention issues more fully on board. Similarly, regional and subregional organizations and networks that are directly involved in chemicals management might also be included, such as the Sahelian Pesticides Committee, the Coordinating Group of the Heads of Pesticides Control Boards in the Caribbean, and others. Also of possible relevance are the existing regional centres established under the Basel Convention and the regional centres called for under the Stockholm Convention;

(c) Identifying opportunities to initiate and strengthen cooperation with secretariats of multilateral environmental agreements and with multilateral and bilateral aid agencies. Initial cooperative efforts between the secretariats of the Basel and Stockholm conventions to conduct training and awareness raising workshops have been successful. There is a need to strengthen this cooperation further in implementation of the conventions. Similarly, there is a broad range of bilateral and multilateral aid and development agencies working on chemicals management issues. Improved cooperation and coordination with the secretariats might be a means of addressing the gaps in regulatory infrastructure identified in paragraph 5 above and ensuring that the needs of the Rotterdam Convention are met;

(d) Establishing a technical cooperation trust fund. Once the Convention enters into force it might be useful to establish a special fund, such as a technical cooperation trust fund, to be used for assistance to Parties. Such a fund would be administered separately from the general fund for the secretariat and would operate under the guidance of the Conference of the Parties;

(e) Refocusing the current training programme administered by the secretariat to the specific needs of countries. A revised training programme could focus on the needs identified in paragraph 5 above. Should such supplementary training take place, it should take into consideration the capacity-building and training efforts under way or planned in other forums;

(f) Targeting the clearing-house-related functions of the secretariat towards meeting the information deficiencies reported by countries. A modest expansion of the secretariat's clearing-house-related activities could help meet some of the information needs identified by countries. Such an additional activity would improve little or no additional secretariat cost, but if agreement is reached on such an approach, countries that possess such information should be prepared to provide the secretariat with it.

### III. POSSIBLE ACTION BY THE COMMITTEE

8. The Committee may wish to consider:

(a) Requesting the secretariat, working within the structures of UNEP and FAO where appropriate, and taking into consideration existing mechanisms for regional delivery of chemicals-related technical assistance, to develop a proposal for the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting on regional delivery of technical assistance to parties. During the interim period, regional delivery should be explored on a case-by-case basis and within available resources;

(b) Requesting the secretariat to strengthen cooperation with other chemicals-related multilateral environmental agreements, bilateral and multilateral aid and development agencies and programmes in undertaking technical assistance and capacity-building work;

(c) Requesting the secretariat to strengthen cooperation with regional and other organizations, where appropriate, in undertaking technical assistance and capacity-building work;

(d) Requesting the secretariat to facilitate access to international literature, databases, risk and hazard evaluations and social and economic assessments of PIC chemicals and their alternatives, and inviting countries participating in the PIC procedure to provide the secretariat with such information, or suitable references or links to such information if under copyright;

(e) Inviting the Conference of the Parties, at its first meeting, to consider establishing a technical cooperation trust fund to support developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition to take the steps necessary to ensure full implementation of the provisions of the Convention;

(f) Requesting the secretariat to develop draft terms of reference for such a trust fund for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its first meeting;

(g) Inviting countries to make their technical assistance needs known to the secretariat, and requesting the secretariat to communicate such requests to all participating countries.

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