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The role of the health sector in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management towards the 2020 goal and beyond: Consultation with Member States

Following the adoption of resolution WHA69.4 by the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly in May 2016, the Secretariat at WHO headquarters has prepared a draft roadmap outlining concrete actions to enhance health sector engagement towards meeting the 2020 goal and contributing to relevant targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. An electronic consultation on the draft roadmap is scheduled to begin in August 2016.

The role of the health sector in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management towards the 2020 goal and beyond

Consultation with Member States

Summary

As requested by WHA Resolution 69.4, the WHO Secretariat has prepared a draft roadmap outlining concrete actions to enhance health sector engagement towards meeting the 2020 goal and contributing to relevant targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. An electronic consultation on the draft roadmap is scheduled to begin in August.

Background/Context

In May 2016, the 69th World Health Assembly adopted Resolution 69.4 on the Role of the Health Sector in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management towards the 2020 goal and beyond.¹ The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) was adopted by the International Conference on Chemicals Management (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 4-6 February 2006) with the overall objective to achieve “the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle so that, by 2020, chemicals are used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment”.² Strong health sector engagement is essential for achievement of the sound management of chemicals.

The World Health Organization has long recognized the importance of sound chemical management for human health, as indicated in resolution WHA59.15 (2006) on health sector participation in the SAICM; WHA63.25 (2010) on the improvement of health through safe and environmentally sound waste management; WHA63.26 on the improvement of health through sound management of obsolete pesticides and chemicals; WHA67.11 (2014) on the public health impacts of exposure to mercury and mercury compounds; and WHA68.8 (2015) on the health impact of air pollution.

Resolution 69.4 is well-aligned with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development³. In particular, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) Target 3.9 aims to substantially reduce the number of deaths and

¹ Available at: http://apps.who.int/gb/ebwha/pdf_files/WHA69/A69_R4-en.pdf

² SAICM texts and resolutions of the International Conference on Chemicals Management. Available at: http://www.saicm.org/images/saicm_documents/saicm%20texts/New%20SAICM%20Text%20with%20ICCM%20re_solutions_E.pdf (accessed 22 July 2016)

³ United Nations General Assembly resolution 70/1 – Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, see http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/70/1 (accessed 22 July 2016)

illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination by 2030. Target 12.4 aims to achieve, by 2020, the environmentally sound management of chemicals and waste throughout their life cycle. Other Goals and targets are also relevant to the health aspects of chemicals, such as Target 6.3, which emphasizes the improvement of water quality.

In 2012, 1.3 million deaths (2.3% of all deaths) and 43 million disability-adjusted life years (1.6% of all disease burden in disability-adjusted life years) were attributable to exposures to a number of selected chemicals⁴. Due to the complex nature of the issue, disease burden information is only available for a very small number of chemical exposures and people are exposed to many more chemicals in their daily lives. The real burden of disease, and the associated demands on health systems, is unknown but likely to be much greater than estimated. The adverse effects associated with acute, chronic and combined chemical exposure can be significant, especially among vulnerable populations. A growing body of evidence indicates that exposures before birth, and even in the previous generation, may lead to disease later in life.

Roadmap to enhance health sector engagement in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management towards the 2020 goal and beyond

Resolution 69.4 requests the WHO Secretariat to present to the 70th World Health Assembly a roadmap outlining concrete actions to enhance health sector engagement towards meeting the 2020 goal and contributing to relevant targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The resolution also requests that the roadmap be developed in consultation with Member States (and, where applicable, regional economic integration organizations), bodies of the United Nations system, and other relevant stakeholders. With this in mind, an electronic consultation on the draft roadmap is scheduled to begin in August, with invitations to Member States via notes verbale.

As specified by Resolution 69.4, the WHO Secretariat has taken into account the Strategic Approach's *Overall orientation and guidance for achieving the 2020 goal*⁵ as well as "The intersessional process to prepare recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020"⁶, and built on WHO's existing relevant work, as well as the *Strategy for strengthening the engagement of the health sector in the implementation of the Strategic Approach*⁷, with particular emphasis in the specific areas described in paragraph 2(1)(a) through (h) of the resolution.

Based on this, the proposed title of the roadmap is: "Roadmap to enhance health sector engagement in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management towards the 2020 goal and beyond". Specific actions for the health sector are grouped under four "Action Areas", as follows:

⁴World Health Organization. The public health impact of chemicals: knowns and unknowns [Internet]. Geneva: WHO/International Programme on Chemical Safety; 2016 [cited 2016 Jul 6] p. 13. Available from: <http://www.who.int/ipcs/publications/chemicals-public-health-impact/en/>

⁵Overall orientation and guidance for achieving the 2020 goal of sound management of chemicals. Available from: http://www.saicm.org/images/saicm_documents/OOG%20document%20English.pdf (accessed 22 July 2016)

⁶The Strategic Approach and sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 [internet]. http://www.saicm.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=569&Itemid=779 (accessed 22 July 2016)

⁷Strategy for strengthening engagement of the health sector in the implementation of the Strategic Approach http://www.who.int/entity/ipcs/capacity_building/chemicals_management/saicm_iccm3_en.pdf?ua=1 (accessed 22 July 2016)

- **Knowledge and Evidence:** Actions focussed on filling gaps in knowledge and methodologies for risk assessment, increasing biomonitoring and disease surveillance, estimating the burden of disease attributable to chemicals, and measuring progress.
- **Risk Reduction:** Actions focussed on risk management by and within the health sector, including prevention strategies, regulating chemicals, public education, and sharing information and best practices.
- **Institutional Capacity:** Actions to strengthen institutional capacity such as achieving the core capacities for chemicals under the International Health Regulations (2005), training and education of health professionals, and strengthening national frameworks.
- **Leadership and Coordination:** Actions to promote the inclusion of health considerations in all chemicals policies, engagement of the health sector in chemicals management activities at national, regional and international levels, and engagement by the health sector with other sectors.

Next Steps:

Following consultation, the roadmap will be revised and a draft will be prepared for discussion at the 140th WHO Executive Board in January 2017.