



## NINETEENTH ITEM ON THE AGENDA

**Report of the Director-General****Second supplementary report:  
Strategic Approach to International  
Chemicals Management****Overview of the Strategic Approach**

1. As requested by paragraph 22 of the conclusions concerning occupational safety and health, adopted at the 91st Session of the International Labour Conference (June 2003), on participation of the ILO in the development of the strategic approach, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) is herewith submitted to the Governing Body for consideration. The Strategic Approach was completed and adopted by the International Conference on Chemicals Management (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 4-6 February 2006), whose participants included representatives of 151 governments, nine organizations of the United Nations system, eight intergovernmental organizations and 47 non-governmental organizations, including the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) and the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU). The Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), at its Ninth Special Session (Dubai, United Arab Emirates, 7-9 February 2006), adopted a decision endorsing the Strategic Approach and the role and activities of UNEP in relation to its implementation. The World Health Assembly at its 59th Session (May 2006) took note of the outcomes of the Strategic Approach, as well the Board of Trustees of the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), and endorsed the process (March 2006).
2. The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management comprises three core texts (see appendix): the Dubai Declaration on International Chemicals Management, the Overarching Policy Strategy and the Global Plan of Action. Among the resolutions adopted by the Conference were decisions on implementation arrangements, the Quick Start Programme and the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety.
3. The Strategic Approach aims, inter alia, to meet the concern that chemicals continue to contaminate the environment worldwide, impairing the health and welfare of millions. It responds to the stated need to assess and manage chemicals more effectively in order to achieve the 2020 goal, articulated in paragraph 23 of the United Nations Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, for the sound management of chemicals. The scope of the Strategic Approach includes: (a) environmental, economic, social, health and labour aspects of chemical safety; and (b) agricultural and industrial chemicals, with a view to

promoting sustainable development and covering chemicals at all stages of their life cycle, including in products. It does not cover products to the extent that the health and environmental aspects of the safety of the chemical and products are regulated by a domestic food or pharmaceutical authority or arrangement. The Strategic Approach is not a legally binding instrument. The Global Plan of Action contains activities that may be undertaken voluntarily by stakeholders, according to their applicability, in order to pursue the commitments and objectives expressed in the high-level Declaration and the Overarching Policy Strategy.

4. The Conference will be reconvened in 2009, 2012, 2015 and 2020 in order to periodically review progress in the implementation of the Strategic Approach, and will be served by a UNEP-based secretariat. Other institutional arrangements to support implementation and taking stock of progress on the Strategic Approach will include national focal points, national coordination (inter-ministerial processes are recommended), regional focal points, Regional Meetings (as appropriate), and, at the international level, a periodic review process. In addition, the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) that includes the ILO, FAO, WHO, UNITAR, UNEP, UNIDO and OECD, with UNDP and the World Bank as observers, was requested to continue to perform a coordinating function for intergovernmental organization activities and work programmes. In addition, it was decided that future sessions of the Conference should be held back-to-back with meetings of the governing bodies of relevant intergovernmental organizations, where appropriate.
5. The objective of the Quick Start Programme, which includes establishment of a trust fund, is to support activities to enable initial capacity building and implementation in developing countries, least developed countries, small island developing States and countries with economies in transition. The Conference invited the representatives of the seven participating organizations of the IOMC and UNDP to form an implementation committee for projects financed by the Quick Start Programme Trust Fund and decided to establish the Quick Start Programme Executive Board, consisting of two government representatives from each of the United Nations regions and all the bilateral and multilateral donors and other contributors to the Programme.

## **The main outcomes for the ILO**

6. The main outcomes of the negotiations on the Strategic Approach for the ILO relate to the inclusion of all the priorities expressed by the ILO's formal submission to the Second Preparatory Committee of the Strategic Approach (Nairobi, October 2004), including confirmation that the Strategic Approach is multi-sectoral; institutional arrangements that enable participation of ILO constituents (Governments, Employers and Workers); recognition of the important role of the ILO in reaching those most at risk from chemicals, namely workers, in implementation; and inclusion of the ILO in the Trust Fund Implementation Committee.
7. The International Conference on Chemicals Management recognized the ILO chemicals-related Conventions, namely the Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170) and the Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention, 1993 (No. 174), as the framework for the sound management of chemicals at the workplace. In addition, the importance of implementing the Globally Harmonized System for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) was also underlined in order to minimize the adverse effects of chemicals on human health and the environment. The successful inclusion of these key instruments in the Dubai Declaration signed by Ministers present, the Overarching Policy Strategy, as well as being main elements in the Global Plan of Action shows their importance.

## Possible next steps

8. As a follow-up to the Strategic Approach, the ILO has to support the implementation efforts on those activities of the Strategic Approach of most relevance to the ILO, in consultation with our constituents (Governments, Employers and Workers) at country, regional and international levels. The Conference encouraged the governing bodies of relevant intergovernmental organizations to endorse or otherwise appropriately acknowledge the Strategic Approach with a view to incorporating its objectives into their programmes of work within their mandates and to report thereon to the International Conference on Chemicals Management.
9. The presence of the ILO in the Trust Fund Implementation Committee will allow due weight to be given to ILO considerations in funding decisions associated with the Quick Start Programme. Colleagues in the field have already been briefed on this, and have been asked to work with constituents and SafeWork in developing projects that can be submitted to the SAICM secretariat for funding under the Quick Start Programme Trust Fund. This is an opportunity, in view of the importance given to ILO chemicals-related Conventions and the GHS in the SAICM outcomes, to seek additional funding from the Trust Fund to ensure that the current promotional (for the Conventions) and capacity building (for the GHS, under the ILO/UNITAR GHS Capacity Building Programme) activities could be continued and even expanded.
10. *The Governing Body may wish to:*
  - (i) *take note of the outcomes of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management; and*
  - (ii) *endorse the follow-up action proposed in paragraphs 8 and 9.*

Geneva, 9 October 2006.

*Point for decision:* Paragraph 10.



