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

## **Report by the Secretariat**

1. In May 2016, the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA69.4, in which the Director-General was requested, inter alia, to develop, in consultation with Member States,<sup>1</sup> bodies of the United Nations system and other relevant stakeholders, a road map for the health sector at the national, regional and international levels towards achieving the 2020 goal<sup>2</sup> and contributing to relevant targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The Director-General was also requested to present the road map to the Seventieth World Health Assembly.

2. Accordingly, a draft road map was prepared by the Secretariat. An overview of its content and general structure is provided below. An electronic consultation, involving a survey, on the draft was held from 9 August to 16 September 2016. The main findings of that consultation are also presented below. The draft road map was revised by the Secretariat in the light of the input received and is available on the WHO website.<sup>3</sup> In addition, a report on the development of the draft road map was included on the agenda of the 68th session of the Regional Committee for the Americas, as an information document.<sup>4</sup>

### **OVERVIEW OF THE DRAFT ROAD MAP**

3. As requested in paragraph 2(1) of resolution WHA69.4, when developing the draft road map, the Secretariat took into account the overall orientation and guidance of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management<sup>5</sup> and the intersessional process to prepare recommendations

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<sup>1</sup> And, where applicable, regional economic integration organizations.

<sup>2</sup> The 2020 goal is articulated in paragraph 23 of the Plan of Implementation of the World Summit on Sustainable Development, adopted in resolution 2 by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Johannesburg, South Africa, 26 August – 4 September 2002) ([http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/131302\\_wssd\\_report\\_reissued.pdf](http://www.unmillenniumproject.org/documents/131302_wssd_report_reissued.pdf), accessed 5 October 2016).

<sup>3</sup> See <http://www.who.int/ipcs/saicm/roadmap> (accessed 15 November 2016).

<sup>4</sup> Document CD55/INF/6, Add. I, available at [http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com\\_docman&task=doc\\_download&gid=35899&Itemid=270&lang=en](http://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&task=doc_download&gid=35899&Itemid=270&lang=en) (accessed 5 October 2016).

<sup>5</sup> “The future we want for the sound management of chemicals” in document SAICM/ICCM.4/6, Annex, see [http://www.saicm.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=525&Itemid=700](http://www.saicm.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=525&Itemid=700) (accessed 5 October 2016).

regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, established through the fourth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management.<sup>1</sup> It also built on WHO's existing relevant work, as well as on the strategy for strengthening the engagement of the health sector in the implementation of the Strategic Approach,<sup>2</sup> with particular emphasis on the specific areas described in paragraphs 2(1)(a)–(h) of resolution WHA69.4.

4. It is recognized that all sectors and stakeholders need to work together to achieve the goal of sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle. The draft road map identifies concrete actions where the health sector has either a lead or important supporting role to play. For those actions not completely within the mandate of the health sector, there still needs to be an awareness of the importance of the action, active support for implementation of the action and, in many cases, increased engagement by the health sector.

5. The actions are organized into four action areas, namely: risk reduction; knowledge and evidence; institutional capacity; and leadership and coordination. These action areas are closely aligned with the objectives set out in the Strategic Approach's Overarching Policy Strategy.<sup>3</sup> Each action area has an outcome statement to describe what outcome the actions are intended to achieve. Because these action areas are interlinked, there are many actions that could have been included in a number of different places within the road map. To avoid repetition, each action has been included only once.

6. The risk reduction action area includes actions focused on risk management by and within the health sector, including health protection strategies, the regulation of chemicals, public education and the sharing of information and best practices. These actions are intended to result in improved health in both the short and the long terms, and for future generations, by reducing the health risks posed by exposure to chemicals throughout their life cycle.

7. The knowledge and evidence action area includes actions focused 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. Overall, these actions are intended to lead to enhanced engagement of the health sector in cooperative efforts to fill current gaps in these areas.

8. The actions identified in the institutional capacity action area are focused on strengthening national institutional capacities to address health threats posed by chemicals, including in response to chemical incidents and emergencies. Actions include the development of national policy and regulatory frameworks, the building of capacity to comply with the International Health Regulations (2005), and the provision of training and education within the health sector. The targeted outcome is increased capacity and resilience of health systems in order to address all aspects of chemical safety.

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<sup>1</sup> Resolution ICCM IV/4, "The Strategic Approach and sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020" in document SAICM/ICCM.4/15, Annex I, see [http://www.saicm.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=525&Itemid=700](http://www.saicm.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=525&Itemid=700) (accessed 5 October 2016).

<sup>2</sup> Document SAICM/ICCM.3/24, Annex V, see [http://www.saicm.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=89:iccm-3-meeting-documents&catid=90:iccm-3&Itemid=527](http://www.saicm.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=89:iccm-3-meeting-documents&catid=90:iccm-3&Itemid=527) (accessed 5 October 2016).

<sup>3</sup> The Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management's Overarching Policy Strategy was adopted in February 2006, and is available at [http://www.saicm.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=73&Itemid=475](http://www.saicm.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=73&Itemid=475) (accessed 5 October 2016).

9. The leadership and coordination action area includes actions that are intended to promote the inclusion of health considerations in all chemicals policies, the engagement of the health sector in chemicals management activities at the national, regional and international levels, and the engagement of the health sector with other sectors. The targeted outcome is increased awareness and integration of health considerations and increased engagement of the health sector in chemicals management activities at all levels, ultimately to raise the profile of and the priority accorded to the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle.

10. For each action, the main actor, or lead, has been identified. While it is recognized that, in many cases, success depends on cooperation among a variety of stakeholders and sectors, the identification of a lead within the health sector, where possible, is intended to be helpful and to facilitate progress. Member States have been identified as the lead in cases where governments, and in particular ministries with responsibilities for human health, would bear most of the responsibility for the action. Similarly, WHO has been identified as the lead in cases where the Secretariat would bear most of the responsibility for the action. In other cases, it is recognized that the entire health sector – including Member States, the Secretariat and others, including other bodies of the United Nations system and non-State actors – needs to play a leadership role.

11. A number of actions within the road map fall within the mandate of WHO and also contribute to increasing the capacity of the secretariat of the Strategic Approach to support activities related to the health sector, as requested in paragraph 2(8) of resolution WHA69.4. These actions are marked in the text of the road map with an asterisk and a corresponding explanatory note is provided. For actions with more than one lead actor, this note applies only to WHO's role.

12. As individual Member States and other stakeholders have different priorities, based on their specific contexts, the actions are not presented in priority order (see also paragraph 17). Furthermore, some of the actions are very broad, while others are quite specific. This variation is intentional and recognizes that Member States and other stakeholders have chosen different approaches to chemicals management and are at different stages of implementation. The inclusion of broader actions makes it possible for countries to tailor the implementation of the road map to their own context.

13. It is hoped that the draft road map will be a useful tool to assist Member States and other health sector stakeholders in identifying areas of primary focus for engagement and additional actions relevant for chemicals management at the national, regional and international levels. It is envisaged that the various components of the health sector will define their own implementation plans for this road map, which will take into account the need to engage and cooperate with others as appropriate.

14. The timeline of the road map is towards the 2020 goal and beyond (to the Sustainable Development Goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development). In paragraph 2(10) of resolution WHA69.4, the Director-General is requested to update the road map according to the outcome of the intersessional process to prepare recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

## MAIN FINDINGS OF THE CONSULTATION

15. In the electronic consultation, Member States,<sup>1</sup> bodies of the United Nations system and others were invited to answer a survey on the content and general structure of the draft road map. The Secretariat received 60 responses (40 from Member States; three from bodies of the United Nations system; and 17 from others) and took them into account when revising the draft.

16. In general, survey respondents were very supportive and welcoming of the draft road map. In particular, there was agreement that the draft road map responded to the request in paragraph 2(1) of resolution WHA69.4. Respondents also generally agreed that the title was appropriate, the organization and illustration of the road map were effective, and the outcome statements were appropriate. They also generally agreed that the actions chosen were the most important and would contribute to achievement of the stated outcomes. It was noted, however, that actual achievement of the outcomes would depend on capacity, resources and political commitment. Some specific suggestions were made for additions or edits to the actions and outcome statements and the Secretariat took these into account when preparing the revised draft.

17. The survey requested respondents to rank the various actions in priority order, giving consideration to national, regional and international importance. While many agreed with the organization of the actions as they were presented, the exercise revealed that stakeholders prioritize actions based on different criteria, including time frame, feasibility, resources and logical order, as well as on considerations related to where they are in terms of developing their own chemicals management regimes and policies. In view of this finding, the order of the actions has not been changed. The comments provided will, however, be very useful for implementing the road map.

18. The survey included a question on how the health sector can best actively participate in the intersessional process to prepare recommendations regarding the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, as requested in paragraph 2(1)(e) of resolution WHA69.4, given that the first meeting is scheduled to take place in February 2017. A range of suggestions were put forward, the most common of which was to ensure health sector representation in the delegations to the meeting. Other suggestions included raising health sector concerns at all levels, networking, and holding meetings in conjunction with international meetings at which the health sector is already represented.

19. The survey also asked how Member States could share information on progress, successes and lessons learned in implementing the road map at the national, regional and international levels. Respondents suggested that information could be shared through the use of existing or new networks, online platforms and reporting processes, as well as through Secretariat reports to various international forums, including the Health Assembly and the International Conference on Chemicals Management.

## ACTION BY THE EXECUTIVE BOARD

20. The Executive Board is invited to note the report and provide further guidance on the draft road map.

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<sup>1</sup> And the European Union.