

Chemical Watch
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ICCM4 to tackle problem pharmaceuticals and pesticides

Saicm preparatory meeting agrees proposal on road to 2020

Environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants (EPPPs) and highly hazardous pesticides (HHPs) will be discussed at the fourth International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM4), which is scheduled for September, next year.

At a Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (Saicm) meeting in Geneva this week, the second open-ended working group (OEWG2) discussed both topics and decided they should be presented to the conference.

A revised proposal to make EPPPs an emerging policy issue under Saicm at ICCM4 was submitted by Peru, Uruguay and the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE). It is seeking greater visibility and policy engagement on the issue, as well as better coordination, consistency and synergies between different initiatives around the world and the engagement of stakeholders from different sectors. The document lists expected outcomes as:

- expert guidance for risk identification and assessment;
- priority setting for research and for risk management and control actions of environmental effects; and
- information exchange and networking, from which scientists and policy makers in developing countries and countries with economies in transition could especially benefit, resulting in greater understanding of EPPP issues and needs for priority actions.

During the plenary session, many countries with developing and transitioning economies supported the draft proposal. A concern raised by the US and Canada on whether it was within Saicm's scope was addressed during a contact group meeting, which saw references to the manufacture of pharmaceuticals removed from it.

Meanwhile, a "non-paper" presented by the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), addressing HHPs and possible next steps for Saicm, will be used with a number of other inputs – including those from the recent regional Saicm meetings and the OEWG2 meeting itself – as the basis of a proposal that will be put to ICCM4.

A "Friends of the Chair" group set up to discuss the topic said that an electronic

consultation on HHPs will be set up and the proposal should be prepared well in advance. The work should be coordinated by FAO, the UN Environment Programme (Unep) and the World Health Organization (WHO).

In addition, the meeting agreed that a draft resolution should be presented, emphasising certain aspects of the existing resolutions on nanotechnology as an emerging policy issue. These aspects cover:

- the exchange of information on nanotechnologies and the sound management of manufactured nanomaterials, referencing the possibility of setting up a clearing house mechanism;
- the development of guidance and training materials; and
- acknowledgement of the work of the UN sub-committee on GHS in assessing the applicability of GHS criteria for the classification of a number of nanomaterials.

The preparatory meeting also agreed the main contents of an overall orientation and guidance (OOG) document, which sets out a work plan towards the 2020 Saicm goal of minimising the adverse impact of chemicals on health and the environment. As well as supporting six activity areas and 11 elements identified at the regional priority-setting workshops ([CW 11 December 2014](#)), the document covers financing and sound chemicals management after 2020. The Saicm secretariat will finalise the document to be presented to ICCM4.

During the plenary session, the International POPs Elimination Network (Ipen) said the OOG is unbalanced as it focuses on process, rather than risk reduction activities. The meeting agreed to its call for an additional note to be attached to the document, stating the need to identify gaps in risk reduction activities where substantial progress can be made by 2020. Ipen said this would give impetus to such activities, including the emerging policy issues.

The EU also announced that it was providing €500,000 towards organising ICCM4. It is the first funding secured, and around half of the money needed.

Emma Chynoweth in Geneva