

A Renewed North American Agenda for Chemicals Management

The long-term commitment of the Council of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation¹ to improve chemicals management in North America, as expressed in Council Resolution 95-05, Sound Management of Chemicals, and Council Resolution 06-09, Advancing the Work of Resolution 95-05, Sound Management of Chemicals, is renewed today to benefit from the experience gained over the previous 12 years, particularly the successfully completed capacity building initiatives undertaken in that timeframe. This renewed North American agenda for chemicals management seeks to provide support to the Parties as they fulfill their commitments under the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) goal of “aiming to achieve, by 2020, that chemicals are used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment.”²

In developing a path forward to improve the trilateral management of chemicals, the three Parties and the CEC Secretariat have initiated an approach that moves away from the single substance assessment and risk reduction mode towards a more integrated approach. The role of the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation, and in particular its Sound Management of Chemicals initiative, was refocused through the Puebla Declaration’s priorities of enhancing information for decision-making, capacity building, and integrating trade and environment concerns.

The Sound Management of Chemicals Working Group (SMOC WG) has developed four major areas to implement the renewed North American chemicals management agenda:

1. Establish a foundation for chemicals management across North America
2. Develop and implement a sustainable regional approach for environmental and human bio-monitoring
3. Reduce the risk from chemicals of mutual concern in North America, as identified by SMOC WG
4. Improve environmental performance of sectors

The attached addendum describes these four major areas and initial activities to promote and implement them, including through Strategies for Catalyzing Cooperation.

The Sound Management of Chemicals Working Group will seek linkages to other initiatives that complement and enhance the Parties’ domestic, bilateral, trilateral and international efforts in the area of chemicals management, as well as horizontal links to other programs supported by the CEC. This new agenda also reaffirms the increased involvement of stakeholders. The SMOC WG will continue working with stakeholders as active partners in realizing the sound management of chemicals in North America, and will be looking to these stakeholders and interested representatives to take responsibility for specific activities under the agenda.

¹ North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation, 1994

² 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) goal

Finally, as the SMOC WG and the CEC Secretariat implement this agenda, the Parties commit to:

- Identifying issues of mutual concern and determining priorities for action. This will be implemented through an open, inclusive, participatory and transparent procedure. The SMOC WG and the CEC Secretariat will review the SMOC program of work in advance of Council reviews to ensure that the agenda remains relevant.
- Developing and overseeing regional approaches while seeking to leverage and complement other bilateral, trilateral or multilateral initiatives.
- Measuring progress and communicating outcomes through evaluating activities, reporting achievements to Council, and seeking Council guidance on major new areas intended to implement the North American agenda for chemicals management.

ADDENDUM

The four major areas, as elaborated below, are the areas that the SMOC WG and the CEC Secretariat intend to realize through this new strategic and cooperative vision to achieve the sound management of chemicals in the North American region:

1. Establish a foundation for chemicals management across North America

Objective: Recognizing that North Americans desire to have approaches to address the risks posed by chemicals in commerce, the SMOC WG seeks to improve efforts related to reducing the risks of exposure to human health and the environment by sharing information on policies, institutions, and processes; to improve comparability of chemical management tools across the three countries; to identify gaps and promote capacity building to assist Mexico in improving its chemicals management capacity at the national level; and to seek opportunities for enhancing comparability of information amongst the Parties. Work under this area is proposed to support the development and implementation of policy instruments as well as regulatory and non-regulatory approaches used in the context of chemicals management and decision making.

The expected results include:

- generally consistent and comparable reporting on the production, importation and use of chemicals;
- sharing information regarding risk assessment and risk management to assist in improving environmental and human health initiatives; and
- strengthening the Parties' capacities to enforce domestic regulations and implement voluntary programs.

Activities that the SMOC WG and the CEC Secretariat propose to undertake between 2008 and 2012 include:

- providing technical and financial assistance to Mexico to develop a Mexican inventory of industrial chemicals in commerce and
- providing opportunities for an ongoing exchange of information regarding domestic priorities and regulatory and non-regulatory chemical management tools in North America.

2. Develop and implement a sustainable regional approach for environmental and human bio-monitoring

Objective: Recognizing the benefits of consistent, comparable and compatible monitoring information describing the state of North America's health and the environment, the SMOC WG will seek to promote the development and implementation of a sustainable North American regional approach to monitor chemicals in the environment, including human bio-monitoring.

In developing this sustainable approach to monitoring and bio-monitoring on a North American scale, it is essential to consider elements such as infrastructure sustainability, interagency integration, national priorities, national capacity, stakeholder and trilateral priorities, and how such work links to the ongoing work of the CEC in its various mandates.

In order to provide valid, verifiable information for decision making, the sustainable regional approach to monitoring will:

- be undertaken with common compatible approaches;
- be sustainable from a national infrastructure perspective;
- be of high importance/priority at the decision makers level, meeting both national and international needs;
- produce high-quality information; and
- contribute to the CEC's North American Atlas and/or State of the Environment initiatives.

Activities that the SMOC WG and the CEC Secretariat propose to undertake between 2008 and 2012, as outlined under Council Resolution 02-08, include:

- promoting a trilateral cooperative forum for developing and integrating a sustainable North American monitoring initiative, including bio-monitoring
- building capacity for the initiation and integration of a Mexican environmental monitoring and assessment program (*Programa de Monitoreo y Evaluación Ambiental*—Proname) into a North American sustainable regional monitoring initiative, and seeking domestic and international sources of funding for its full implementation; and
- assisting Mexico in the development of its monitoring and assessment capacity for persistent toxic substances, in support of Proname and its National Implementation Plan under the Stockholm Convention.

3. Reduce the risk from chemicals of mutual concern in North America, as identified by SMOC WG

Objective: Recognizing the continuing need to assess and develop strategies for addressing chemicals in North America, throughout their life cycles to reduce and prevent adverse effects to human health and environment in North America, the SMOC WG seeks to enhance the capacity of the Parties and the CEC Secretariat to prioritize and assess chemicals or groups of chemicals of mutual concern, continue implementation of approved North American Regional Action Plans, and implement strategies to catalyze cooperation in order to reduce the risk of exposure to emerging chemicals of mutual concern.

The expected results include:

- promotion of trilateral discussion in the area of emerging substances and classes of chemicals of mutual concern;
- development and initiation of risk reduction strategies where mutual concern is acknowledged for substances or groups of substances; and
- complete implementation of North American Regional Action Plans (NARAPs) previously approved by Council.

Activities that the SMOC WG and the CEC Secretariat propose to undertake between 2008 and 2012 include:

- implementing recommendations and completing work under the NARAP on mercury by 2010;
- implementing recommendations and completing work under the NARAP on lindane and other HCH isomers by 2016;
- completing development of and implementing a Strategy for Catalyzing Cooperation on Dioxins, Furans and Hexachlorobenzene, which will include

support for Mexico's efforts to address risks from dioxins according to its Stockholm Convention National Implementation Plan;

- initiating trilateral activities focused on collaboration with Mexico to assist in assessing the country's needs in addressing PBDEs, based on SMOC WG identification of polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) as chemicals of mutual concern; and
- implementing a mechanism to exchange information regarding other emerging chemical issues, with the aim of identifying and acting on additional chemicals of mutual concern.

4. Improve the Environmental Performance of Sectors

Objective: Recognizing that working strategically with key industrial sectors across North America to improve environmental performance has considerable potential for effectively and efficiently reducing the risk of exposure to toxic chemicals in North America, the SMOC WG seeks to develop and apply successful models of integrated environmental management and government/private sector cooperation to stimulate similar initiatives on a North American scale and provide examples to other international initiatives. The Working Group will also seek horizontal links with other CEC programs.

The expected results include:

- promoting initiatives such as: greening design and supply chains, energy efficiency, pollution prevention, recyclability, purchasing policies, voluntary standards and the appropriate disposal of waste;
- enhancing regional approaches that contribute to trade and environment linkages;
- collaborating with ongoing efforts by others; and
- encouraging industry to meet regional or global environmental standards and improve environmental performance.

Activities that the SMOC WG and the CEC Secretariat will undertake between 2008 and 2012 include:

- supporting further work on the health care sector through the North American Regional Action Plan on mercury and building capacity to address other chemicals in the health care sector;
- working closely and collaborating on ongoing CEC efforts related to the electronics sector;
- working closely and collaborating on ongoing CEC efforts related to the automotive sector; and
- initiating discussions and collaborative efforts with stakeholders regarding new sectors of mutual interest to the SMOC WG.