

A Cooperative Approach for the Sound Management of Chemicals in Mexico

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With the recent adoption of the Strategic Approach for International Chemicals Management (SAICM,) Mexico has initiated a process to develop an implementation plan to achieve this integrated approach. To accomplish this task a strong and coordinated effort is required among different actors from government (Ministries of Environment, Agriculture, Health, Transport, Economy, Energy and Labour), industry, academia, NGO's and other members of the public.

A coordinated programme is essential in order to establish a group of initiatives, policies and strategies to create risk prevention instruments and reduce the adverse effects of chemicals and chemical wastes at local and regional levels.

Mexico's contribution to UNITAR's "*Thematic Workshop on Governance, Civil Society Participation and Strengthening Partnerships for Chemicals and Waste Management and SAICM Implementation*" would be based on national and regional experiences in these issues.

As a member country of the Sound Management of Chemicals (SMOC) initiative of the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation, which gives priority to the management and control of substances of mutual concern that are persistent and toxic, but also envisaged cooperation on other aspects of the sound management of the full range of chemical substances in the region.

The mechanism for trilateral work on persistent and toxic chemicals has been through North American Regional Action Plans (NARAPs), which have benefited Mexico in many aspects of chemicals management. NARAPs have been developed for DDT, Chlordane, PCBs and Mercury taking a substance-by-substance approach. In addition, a NARAP on Environmental Monitoring and Assessment has been developed to address pathways of exposure and assess progress in controlling pollution. Work is currently underway to develop NARAPs for Lindane, and a group of substances including Dioxins, Furans and Hexachlorobenzene.

Under these mechanism accomplishments have been made for these substances and include: Mexico ceased DDT production in 1997 and achieved a 90 percent reduction in DDT use for malaria vector control (the only permitted use in Mexico). Through attraction of additional funding support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), this success story on DDT is currently being shared with Central American nations through information and technology exchanges that can help to inform their efforts. The NARAP on Chlordane resulted by 1998 in cessation of production or formulation of the chemical anywhere in North America.

The PCB NARAP has primarily targeted environmentally sound management and control of PCBs throughout their life cycle, and safe phase-out and

destruction. These goals are being achieved with completion of current domestic activities, including development of regulatory controls, which have been initiated in the three countries. Some actions in the PCB action plan were linked to the expectation that destruction technologies could be utilized by Mexico.

Implementation of the mercury NARAP includes assessment of mechanisms for tracking imports and exports of mercury for use and disposal, in order to improve them. A North American baseline of areas with elevated concentrations of mercury has been produced and mapped. This effort will help in assessments of North America's contribution of mercury releases from natural and human-generated activity to the global atmosphere. The installation of mercury monitoring equipment at two sites in Mexico coordinated with US and a Canadian network is resulting in the first North American continental network of mercury.

Overall, the most important actions for the success of these Regional Action Plans have required close coordination and synergies between government agencies, communication to the public and public participation, as well as the exchange of information and a continuous capacity building process.

Furthermore, Mexico has shown leadership and gained experience at the international level by putting forward a proposal to include Lindane in the Stockholm Convention on POPs. A comprehensive report with a national profile on Lindane prepared by Mexico with a multi-stakeholder participation is available. More information can be found through the Internet at the National Institute of Ecology website: http://www.ine.gob.mx/dgicurg/download/Proyectos-2003/EL_LINDANO_EN_MEXICO.pdf

The process followed by Mexico in order to prepare such a profile for Lindane, included an effective and coordinated work plan among all interested actors, with active participation from all sectors at a national scale. This approach included several workshops which focused on information sharing as well as on identifying constraints and obstacles. An action plan was then developed resulting in a cooperative effort to reduce risks associated to this chemical and furthermore, it also strengthen collaboration with industry for chemical-related projects. Currently, Mexico is developing a profile on electronic waste and its chemical related risks, in collaboration with several sectors, including partnerships with industry.