

Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals

Sub-Committee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized
System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals

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Other business

Review of ECOSOC subsidiary bodies to be conducted during the 2022 session of ECOSOC, expected contributions from the GHS Sub-Committee and related follow-up actions

Note by the secretariat

Introduction

1. The General Assembly adopted on 25 June 2021 **resolution 75/290 A** on the “Review of the implementation of General Assembly resolution 72/305 on the strengthening of the Economic and Social Council” **and resolution 75/290 B** on the “Review of the implementation of GA resolutions 67/290 on the format and organizational aspects of the High-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF) and 70/299 on the follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the global level”.¹
2. In this resolution, the General Assembly “calls upon the Council, its subsidiary bodies and other relevant bodies and platforms of the United Nations system to implement the provisions contained therein in an expeditious manner;”.
3. The resolutions were adopted to address the views expressed by many Member States that continue to see a need for reinforcing ECOSOC’s guidance and coordination of its subsidiary bodies and for **enhancing the work of its subsidiary bodies, aligning them more closely with the 2030 Agenda and reinforcing their expert nature**. They aim at supporting the Council to effectively carry out its Charter mandates and contribute to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and other United Nations conferences and summits in the social, economic and environmental areas as well as to the response to Covid-19.
4. As a follow-up to the General Assembly resolutions and to strengthen further the Council’s oversight, guidance and coordination role of its subsidiary bodies, the President and Bureau of the Council were invited to work with the bureaux of its subsidiary bodies and in consultation with delegations during the 2022 session of the Council, so as to identify possible actions to be taken to implement the provisions of paragraphs 28 and 29 of the Annex to General Assembly resolution 72/305:²

¹ Information about past and on-going reviews of ECOSOC and HLPF is available at : ECOSOC and HLPF Reviews | 75th Economic and Social Council

² <https://undocs.org/A/RES/72/305>

Para 28.

*The Economic and Social Council should strengthen its oversight and coordination role of its subsidiary bodies. It should review their work with a view to ensuring their continued relevance. It will also ensure that they produce technical and expert analysis, assessments and policy recommendations to inform the integrated view of the Council and **inform efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda. It should effectively integrate the outcomes of its subsidiary bodies into its own work.***

Para 29.

*The Economic and Social Council should **request its subsidiary bodies to ensure that they best support the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the work of the Council. Their work should reflect the need for an integrated and action-oriented approach to the Sustainable Development Goals. Their recommendations should build on a solid evidence-based review of progress on the 2030 Agenda and of the outcomes of conferences and summits in their respective area. They should work in an efficient, effective, transparent and inclusive manner.***

5. The resolution also provided guidance on the preparations for the new coordination segment that would replace the integration segment and the informal meeting of the Council with the Chairs of the subsidiary bodies. This new segment will be held annually for up to two days by early February. In its resolution E/RES/2022/1,³ the Economic and Social Council decided that the coordination segment will be held on 3 and 4 February 2022. The intention of the coordination segment is:

- to bring together all ECOSOC subsidiary bodies and UN system entities, (including specialized agencies) at the beginning of the year to provide forward-looking policy guidance to guide the work of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies in the following six months, culminating in the high-level segment of ECOSOC and the High-level political forum on sustainable development (HLPF).
- to ensure coherence and direction in the policies and normative work of subsidiary bodies and specialized agencies relating to the 2030 Agenda as well as to other aspects of the work of the Council.
- to allow for better coordination of the Council system towards an efficient and integrated workflow.

Focus of the review

6. The focus of the review mandated by the General Assembly includes ensuring that subsidiary bodies produce high-quality assessments and policy recommendations on the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It should also ensure that subsidiary bodies adequately support the work of ECOSOC.

7. It is expected that ECOSOC utilize the review to:

- rethink its agenda to make it fully relevant in supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and the Council's role in advancing the decade of action and the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic.
- reflect on how to ensure that the work of their subsidiary bodies builds on science, data, evidence and expert analysis.

³ <https://undocs.org/E/RES/2022/1>

- assess whether subsidiary bodies look at integrated policies building on the interlinkages across the SDGs and produce action-oriented recommendations.
- discuss how key emerging trends identified in the outcome document of the SDG summit, the Political Declaration of the 75th anniversary of the United Nations and other events or scientific analysis could be better reflected in the agendas of subsidiary bodies.
- Consider whether emerging consensus on specific aspects of the Common Agenda could be discussed in subsidiary bodies.
- identify gaps and recommendations to increase coordination and coherence among the subsidiary bodies.
- Reflect on how ECOSOC can build better on the combined work of its subsidiary bodies in producing impactful guidance on integrated policies to achieve the SDGs, taking into account the synergies and trade-offs that may be identified based on the work of the subsidiary bodies.

Process for conducting the review

8. The review is expected to start in November 2021 and be completed by June-July 2022 with the related proposals being considered by ECOSOC during its management segment in July 2022. The secretariats are requested to provide strong support for the review.

9. The format of the outcome of the review (e.g.: resolution, summary) will be decided based on the proposals of the bureaux of ECOSOC and its subsidiary bodies.

Expected contributions from the GHS Sub-Committee and related follow-up actions

10. The Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods and on the GHS and its two subcommittees are subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC. As such, they are expected to contribute to the ECOSOC review following the request by the General Assembly.

11. ECOSOC functional commissions and other **intergovernmental bodies** and forums, are **invited to share relevant input and deliberations as they address goals and targets from the perspective of themes of the 2021 and 2022 ECOSOC and HLPF**, as follows:

- 2021 theme and related SDGs:

The theme of the 2021 session was “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”.

SDGs reviewed in depth by the HLPF in 2021:

1 (no poverty), 2 (zero hunger); 3 (good health and well-being), 8 (decent work and economic growth); 10 (reduced inequalities); 12 (responsible consumption and production); 13 (climate action); 16 (peace, justice and strong institutions); and 17 (means of implementation and partnerships for the Goals).

- 2022 theme and related SDGs:

The theme of the 2022 session will be: “Building back better from the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) while advancing the full implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”.

SDGs to be reviewed in depth by the HLPF in 2022:

4 (quality education), 5 (gender equality), 14 (life below water), 15 (life on land), and 17 (partnerships for the goals). The forum will also take into account the different and particular impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic across all SDGs and the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the Goals.

12. The request from contributions to the 2021 theme was unfortunately not received by the secretariat on time for the Sub-Committee to consider it at its July session. However, it has been agreed with the ECOSOC secretariat that this contribution can be provided after the December session, together with inputs relating to the preparation of the 2022 coordination segment of the ECOSOC to be held in February next year.

13. The Council and the HLPF expect recommendations from the functional commissions and expert bodies on various aspects of recovering better from COVID-19, including socio-economic policies, data and information management, food security and nutrition, digital and other technologies, governance and institutional elements, forests and sustainable recovery as well as impact of the pandemic on various aspects of human rights.

14. As part of the preparatory work for the ECOSOC and HLPF forum sessions, the ECOSOC secretariat has sent a questionnaire (see Annex II) including policy-related questions as well as a request for mapping GHS Sub-Committee work and outcomes with the sustainable development goals.

15. The Sub-Committee is invited to consider and provide feedback on:

- (a) the draft contribution prepared by the secretariat in Annex I;
- (b) the questions in Annex II.

16. The contributions from the GHS Sub-Committee on (a) and (b) above will be communicated after the session to the ECOSOC secretariat.

Annex I

Overview of the work of the GHS Sub-Committee and its linkages to the 2030 Agenda

Links between the sustainable development agenda and the GHS

1. The GHS is the result of the work initiated following the mandate given in 1992 by the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio Earth Summit), as reflected in Chapter 19 of Agenda 21 (programme area B), paragraphs 26 and 27):

“26. Globally harmonized hazard classification and labelling systems are not yet available to promote the safe use of chemicals, inter alia, at the workplace or in the home. Classification of chemicals can be made for different purposes and is a particularly important tool in establishing labelling systems. There is a need to develop harmonized hazard classification and labelling systems, building on ongoing work;

27. A globally harmonized hazard classification and compatible labelling system, including material safety data sheets and easily understandable symbols, should be available, if feasible, by the year 2000.”

2. The commitment advanced in Agenda 21 to the sound management of chemicals was renewed and reaffirmed by the international community in subsequent world summits and conferences. These include for instance: the Millennium Summit (2000); the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD, Johannesburg Summit 2002); the First International Conference on Chemicals Management (2006); the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, 2012 (Rio+20) or the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit (2015).

3. High-level declarations, resolutions, strategic approaches and policies emanating from these intergovernmental processes address the importance of protecting human health and the environment from exposure to hazardous chemicals during their handling, transport, use and disposal. GHS and GHS implementation have been specifically referred to by some of them as one of the tools, targets and indicators of achievement towards that goal.

4. GHS and GHS implementation is one of the tools, targets and indicators being considered for the new overarching approach for the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 that is currently under negotiation.

5. The GHS Sub-Committee is responsible for:

- maintaining and updating the GHS,
- ensuring its continued relevance,
- managing and giving direction to the harmonization process,
- promoting its understanding and use and encourage feedback,
- making it available for worldwide use and application,
- making guidance available on its application and on interpretation and use of technical criteria to support consistency of application, and
- preparing work programmes and submitting recommendations to the Committee.

6. By nature, the Sub-Committee:

- (a) builds on science, data, evidence, technical and expert analysis and on the interlinkages across the Sustainable Development Goals
 - (i) GHS criteria is developed based on available scientific data on the hazardous properties of chemicals and their impact on human health and the environment. This assessment builds on the analysis of their physico-chemical and toxicological characteristics, as well as on the available test methods to evaluate them. The criteria in the GHS is updated, when necessary, to take account of new available information and test methods. For instance, the Sub-Committee is currently working on reviewing the criteria for some hazard classes to allow using of additional types of data and testing methods for classification (e.g: non-animal testing methods).
 - (ii) supports implementation of the 2030 agenda and its work is aligned with SDG goals and targets (see paragraphs 7 to 37 below)
- (b) produces highly technical outcomes, policy and action-oriented recommendations

The outcome of the work of the Sub-Committee is the “Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS)”.

It is a highly technical document and the related policy and action-oriented recommendation for its implementation worldwide is channelled by the Sub-Committee through its parent Committee to ECOSOC.

As a result of this recommendation, ECOSOC, through the resolutions on the work of the Committee and its two sub-committees invites “Governments that have not yet done so to take the necessary steps, through appropriate national procedures and/or legislation, to implement the Globally Harmonized System as soon as possible;” and “the regional commissions, United Nations programmes, specialized agencies and other organizations concerned to promote the implementation of the Globally Harmonized System and, where relevant, to amend their respective international legal instruments addressing transport safety, workplace safety, consumer protection or the protection of the environment, so as to give effect to the Globally Harmonized System through such instruments”.

It also encourages “Governments, the regional commissions, United Nations programmes, specialized agencies and other relevant international organizations and non-governmental organizations, in particular those representing industry, strengthen their support for the implementation of the Globally Harmonized System by providing financial contributions and/or technical assistance for capacity building activities in developing countries and countries with economies in transition”.

The Sub-Committee reports to ECOSOC every two years on the implementation of the resolutions and the recommendations contained therein. The report on the work of the Committee and its two sub-committees for the period 2019-2020 and on the implementation of ECOSOC resolution 2019/7 was considered by ECOSOC in 2020⁴ and was followed by resolution E/RES/2021/13.⁵

- (c) works in an efficient, effective and transparent and inclusive manner

United Nations Member States, as well as United Nations programmes, specialized agencies, institutes and intergovernmental and non-

⁴ See E/2021/10 (<https://undocs.org/en/E/2021/10>)

⁵ <https://undocs.org/E/RES/2021/13>

governmental organisations can participate in the work of the Sub-Committee in accordance with ECOSOC rules of procedure. All participants can submit proposals for consideration by the Sub-Committee. These proposals are made publicly available as well as the reports containing the outcome of the discussions at the Sub-Committee. Meetings are held back-to-back with the ECOSOC Sub-Committee on transport of dangerous goods, to maximise synergies, avoid duplication of work and facilitate participation and exchange of views of experts from both sub-committees on matters of common interest.

(d) Works in cooperation with other UN bodies, intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations

(i) The GHS was developed through cooperation between the organisations participating in the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals and later on more specifically with the ECOSOC Sub-Committee of Experts on Transport of Dangerous Goods, OECD and ILO. After its establishment, the GHS Sub-Committee continues to cooperate with these bodies on a regular basis as need arises.

(ii) UNITAR, ILO and OECD were designated as the GHS Sub-Committee's focal points for GHS capacity-building. These organisations continue to promote GHS implementation and regularly report to the Sub-Committee on capacity-building activities worldwide under their responsibility (development of implementation tools and guidance, training courses, workshops).

GHS implementation has also been addressed by the United Nations Environment Programme within the framework of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). Several countries around the world benefited over the years from SAICM "Quick Start Programmes" addressing GHS implementation and capacity-building.

(iii) Several UN organizations, programmes and institutes as well as intergovernmental and non-governmental organisations implement the GHS through the legal instruments, laws, regulations, policies, codes of practice, guidelines or recommendations under their responsibility. These include for instance: FAO and WHO (classification and labelling of pesticides); WHO (prevention of poisoning); ILO (occupational safety and health); OECD (classification and testing methods for health and environmental hazards); UNEP (SAICM, Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions). These organisations participate in and contribute to the work of the Sub-Committee when deemed necessary and appropriate. Some GHS Sub-Committee members also lead or contribute to GHS implementation projects in third countries as part of national programs for international cooperation. Non-governmental organisations representing the chemical industry participate actively in the work of the Sub-Committee and continue to support GHS implementation worldwide.

The GHS Sub-Committee also works in close cooperation with its sister subsidiary body (the ECOSOC Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods) to ensure mutual alignment and coordinated implementation of their recommendations.

The GHS and the sustainable development goals

7. The GHS aims at protecting human life and the environment from exposure to hazardous chemicals during their handling, transport and use. It does so by providing a set of internationally agreed classification criteria for the identification of the intrinsic physico-chemical, health and environmental hazards of these chemicals and for conveying information about them (through harmonized hazard communication labels as labels and safety data sheets).
8. The GHS also provides the basis for harmonization of rules and regulations on chemicals at national, regional and worldwide levels.
9. Although the benefits of implementing the GHS have a social, economic and environmental dimension, there is no data available to quantify them.
10. The only indicator that has been used so far to measure GHS impact at worldwide level is the number of countries that have implemented it. However, due to the modular approach of the GHS, its multisectoral scope, and the fact that some countries may apply it indirectly for some sectors when complying with the requirements of mandatory international instruments addressing chemical safety that require implementation of the GHS criteria for their own purposes, evaluating the impact of GHS implementation worldwide has proven to be a challenging exercise.
11. In addition, given that the GHS Sub-Committee does not have an enforcement role and that the GHS is a non-legally binding instrument and as such, does not prescribe an obligation to stakeholders to report on progress with implementation or compliance, reports on progress towards achievement of sustainable development goals or GHS worldwide implementation rely only on information publicly available or provided on a voluntary basis.
12. At international level, United Nations programmes and specialized agencies as well as other intergovernmental organisations are implementing GHS criteria to develop, amend or revise their relevant international instruments dealing with chemical safety and in particular, those addressing transport of dangerous goods; pesticide management; occupational safety and health; characterization of wastes; and prevention of major industrial accidents.
13. At regional and national level, the GHS is implemented through regional or national legislation to protect workers and consumers from the harmful effects of hazardous chemicals.
14. An overview of the status of implementation of the GHS at international, regional and national level is available at: <https://unece.org/ghs-implementation-0>
15. The following SDGs have been identified as the most closely aligned with the GHS and the work of the GHS Sub-Committee.

Goal 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

3 GOOD HEALTH
AND WELL-BEING



Main related target(s)

3.9 By 2030, substantially reduce the number of deaths and illnesses from hazardous chemicals and air, water and soil pollution and contamination.

Other related target(s)

3.4 By 2030, reduce by one third premature mortality from non-communicable diseases through prevention and treatment and promote mental health and well-being.

16. According to WHO, about 2 million lives were lost in 2019 due to exposure to selected chemicals.⁶ This figure represents an increase of 20% compared to the data available in the 2016 report.

17. One of the expected benefits of the GHS is to protect those who handle and use hazardous chemicals by identifying their intrinsic hazards and communicating them through labels and safety data sheets, as appropriate, to enable users and workers to take the appropriate measures to protect themselves from exposure.

18. The GHS contains criteria to identify chemicals presenting physico-chemical, health and environmental hazards. The hazards addressed cover a wide range of properties found in chemicals widely handled and used worldwide, either at the workplace (as part of industrial processes or activities) or as components in household products of common use.

19. These include at present: explosives (including desensitized explosives); flammable and oxidizing liquids, solids and gases, aerosols and chemicals under pressure; self-reactive; pyrophoric and self-heating substances and mixtures; corrosive to metals; gases under pressure, substances and mixtures which in contact with water emit flammable gases; chemicals presenting acute toxicity by inhalation, ingestion or dermal contact; corrosive or irritant to skin; causing irreversible effects to the eye or eye irritation; respiratory or skin sensitizers; chemicals known or suspected to induce mutations in the germ cells of humans that can be transmitted to the progeny; known or suspected to induce cancer; known or suspected to produce adverse effects on sexual function and fertility, the development of the offspring or effects on or via lactation; known or suspected to cause damage to specific organs following single or repeated exposure; known or suspected to cause toxicity by aspiration; and chemicals hazardous to the aquatic environment and to the ozone layer.

20. Some of the health hazards addressed by the GHS are relevant when addressing noncommunicable diseases (target 3.4) such as cancer or respiratory-related conditions.

21. A GHS conforming label or safety data sheet gives users the necessary information about the hazards of the chemical and on how to handle and use it safely, including the precautionary prevention, response, storage and disposal measures to be taken to minimise exposure or release in the environment.

22. Although it is not possible to quantify at worldwide level the direct impact of GHS implementation in the reduction of deaths and illness from exposure to chemicals, it is widely acknowledged that availability of information about their hazards (through labels – for common users, and safety data sheets – at the workplace) plays a significant role in preventing unintentional poisonings and minimising exposure.

⁶ “The public health impact of chemicals: knowns and unknowns” (WHO, 2016)

Goal 6: Ensure access to water and sanitation for all

6 CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Main related target(s)

6.3 By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally.

23. One in three people do not have access to safe drinking water.⁷ In some countries, water supply for daily use for several millions of people is threatened by high levels of industrial pollution caused by uncontrolled dumping and release of hazardous chemicals into watercourses.

24. The GHS provides criteria to identify chemicals hazardous for the aquatic environment. Implementing the GHS allows policy makers to identify the chemicals at stake and take informed decisions about the measures to regulate them and control, eliminate or minimise their dumping and release into the environment.

Goal 8: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages

8 DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Main related target(s)

8.8 Protect labour rights and promote safe and secure working environments for all workers, including migrant workers, in particular women migrants, and those in precarious employment

25. According to ILO estimates, every year, more than 1 billion workers are exposed to hazardous substances in their working environments. Over 2,780,000 workers around the world die globally each year due to their working conditions and exposure to hazardous substances claim the lives of almost 1 million workers. This translates to at least one worker dying every 30 seconds due to occupational chemical exposure.⁸

26. The GHS can play a key role when it comes to protecting labour rights and promote and ensure safe working environments for all workers.

27. Occupational chemical exposures may lead to acute poisoning by inhalation, ingestion or dermal contact; or produce or induce a wide range of (reversible and irreversible) toxic effects in different parts (e.g: eye, skin) or body systems (e.g: reproductive, cardiovascular, respiratory and immune systems) and specific organs (e.g: liver, kidney, brain). The GHS allows for the hazard characterization of chemicals presenting these hazards.

28. Industrial accidents caused by improper handling and/or storage of chemicals also take their toll in human lives. The GHS addresses physico-chemical hazards relevant for the prevention of industrial accidents (e.g: explosivity, flammability). Implementation of GHS criteria for hazard characterization of chemicals through legal instruments, guidelines, good practices and recommendations addressing prevention of major industrial hazards can help to take informed decisions about

⁷ <https://www.who.int/news/item/18-06-2019-1-in-3-people-globally-do-not-have-access-to-safe-drinking-water-unicf-who>

⁸ “Exposure to hazardous chemicals at work and resulting health impacts: A global review “. ILO, 2021 (https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/resources-library/publications/WCMS_811455/lang--en/index.htm)

threshold quantities and segregation measures for storage, as well as appropriate measures to be taken for their safe handling.

29. Giving workers appropriate information about the hazards of the chemicals they are exposed to at the workplace is part of their “right-to-know”. GHS conforming labels and safety data sheets provide workers with all the necessary information to about these hazards, including for instance (the list is non-exhaustive):

- Physical and chemical properties, toxicological, chemical stability and reactivity information, conditions to avoid during handling and use, possibility of hazardous reactions and decompositions, likely routes of exposure, acute and chronic effects from short- and long-term exposure;
- Occupational exposure limits and individual protection measures (e.g.: personal protective equipment)
- First-aid and fire-fighting measures
- Accidental release measures
- Conditions for safe handling and storage
- Disposal considerations

30. GHS implementation is promoted by ILO as one of the actions contributing to the improvement of Occupational Health and Safety. The ILO report “The GHS in the world of work” gives a detailed view on the synergies between ILO instruments and the GHS.⁹

Goal 12: *Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns*



Main related target(s)

12.4 By 2020, achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment

Other related target(s)

12.6 Encourage companies, especially large and transnational companies, to adopt sustainable practices and to integrate sustainability information into their reporting cycle

12.A Support developing countries to strengthen their scientific and technological capacity to move towards more sustainable patterns of consumption and production

31. Sustainable consumption and production refer to “the use of services and related products, which respond to basic needs and bring a better quality of life while minimizing the use of natural resources and toxic materials as well as the emissions of waste and pollutants over the life cycle of the service or product so as not to jeopardize the needs of future generations”.

32. The GHS provides criteria to assess physico-chemical, health and environmental hazards in chemicals. This assessment can be used by policymakers to restrict or ban them partially or totally from industrial and or household chemicals. It can also encourage the chemical industry to look for safer alternatives (e.g., less hazardous ingredients) following the concept of “safe by design”, thus contributing to a more sustainable production pattern. GHS labels can also increase consumer’s awareness

⁹ https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/safety-and-health-at-work/news/WCMS_818523/lang--en/index.htm

about the hazardous properties of the chemicals they use and help them identifying chemicals of concern contained in everyday products and safer alternatives.

33. From a policy point of view, the GHS provides an internationally harmonized approach to chemicals' hazard assessment that enables countries to get consistent and appropriate information on the chemicals they import or produce that can be used to establish appropriate infrastructures to control chemical exposures and protect people and the environment. This is particularly useful for countries with no or limited experience in chemicals management. Using the GHS as the foundation for the establishment of legislation addressing classification and labelling of chemicals gives them the opportunity to build on the knowledge and experience gained by developed countries in implementing the system and benefit from all the GHS compliant information already available. This can help increasing efficiency in consumption and production in these countries while at the same time helping them decoupling economic growth from environmental degradation.

Goal 14: Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources



Main related target(s)

14.1 By 2025, prevent and significantly reduce marine pollution of all kinds, in particular from land-based activities, including marine debris and nutrient pollution

34. Land-based activities involving chemicals may have a significant impact on marine pollution when these chemicals are released into the environment. Some are deliberately dumped into the sea, others are found downstream from their sources. These may include for instance, chemicals coming from industrial or mining sites, inorganic chemical pollution resulting from agricultural pesticides use, or toxic metals release.

35. The GHS provides criteria to identify chemicals hazardous for the aquatic environment and includes guidance for classification of complex and “difficult to test” substances such as petroleum distillate fractions, polymers, metals and metal compounds, etc.

36. Implementing the GHS allows policy makers to identify the chemicals at stake and take informed decisions about the measures to regulate them and control, eliminate or minimise their dumping and release into the environment.

Facts about hazardous chemicals and their interlinkages with sustainable development and human rights

37. The following considerations may help illustrating some of the social, environmental and economic dimensions of sustainable development in relation to the sound management of chemicals:

- Low-income countries have a higher % of population working in agriculture than that in high-income countries. They are often more exposed to pesticides and other chemicals and less aware of their hazards.
- Least developed countries have a significant development potential for industrialization, higher productivity and sustained employment. These include activities usually involving hazardous chemicals. Ensuring sustainable industrialization is key to protect workers from exposure to them.
- Child labour is most prevalent in low and middle-income countries and declines as the level of human development increases. According to ILO-UNICEF estimates, 79 million children are performing hazardous work

directly endangering their health, safety and moral development.¹⁰ Hazardous work includes activities involving exposure to hazardous chemicals (e.g. agriculture, mining, construction, tannery). Children are more vulnerable than adults to the effects of hazardous chemicals. Identifying the chemicals and activities of concern and raising awareness of occupational chemical's related hazards can contribute to enforce policies towards eradication of child labour.

- According to UN Habitat, more than 1 billion people live in slums¹¹. Informal settlements and slums remain the only home for millions of urban residents in developing countries, with populations lacking access to basic services such as water, sanitation or waste collection and management facilities. They are often located in areas close to open dumps or highly contaminated industrial areas. Open burning of uncollected waste produces pollutants that are highly damaging. Slum dwellers are often exposed to hazardous chemicals either because of the high levels of air and water pollution around them or following exposure, e.g. while working as garbage collectors. Waste management (including hazardous waste) and access to basic services need to be part of urban planning as factors helping cities and countries to better manage resources, mitigate and prevent environmental pollution, create business, employment and livelihood opportunities, and shift towards a circular economy.
- Among other consequences, climate change can lead to increased release of hazardous chemicals into the environment, greater likelihood of higher incidences of pest and disease outbreaks and associated pesticide usage; events causing disruption of operations and infrastructure leading to hazardous chemicals releases (e.g. mobilization of hazardous chemicals from waste and wastewater facilities, mine sites, tailing dams).¹² The hazardous properties of the chemicals involved need to be taken into account as part of the site-planning to help defining the measures to be taken to minimize risks associated with their accidental release following a climate-change related event.
- The way hazardous chemicals and wastes are managed throughout their life cycle may have an impact on the full enjoyment of human rights. The Human Rights Council defined in 2019 a set of 15 principles¹³ on human rights and the protection of workers from exposure to toxic substances, and encouraged States, business and other actors to implement them. The principles address, among other factors, workers "right to know" and the need to make occupational health and safety information available and accessible to them in a form that effectively serves their needs. A special rapporteur "on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes" provides regular reports to the Human Rights Council and the General Assembly.¹⁴ GHS is often mentioned by countries reporting on progress towards the sound management of chemicals as one of the tools they implement or consider implementing to achieve that goal.

¹⁰ https://www.ilo.org/ipecc/Informationresources/WCMS_800278/lang-en/index.htm?ssSourceSiteId=global

¹¹

<https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities/#:~:text=828%20million%20people%20live%20in,per%20cent%20of%20carbon%20emissions>

¹² <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/chemicals-wastes-and-climate-change-interlinkages-and-potential-coordinated-action>

¹³ <https://undocs.org/en/A/HRC/42/41>

¹⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Environment/SRTtoxicsandhumanrights/Pages/Index.aspx>

Annex II

Questionnaire requesting input from the Sub-Committee in preparation of the 2022 ECOSOC coordination segment

The purpose of this questionnaire is to gather information and ideas as inputs to the preparation of the 2022 Coordination Segment of the Economic and Social Council. The secretariat will convey the replies from the Sub-Committee to the ECOSOC secretariat after the session.

- Question 1: Bearing in mind the mandates of the new Coordination Segment, how do you think this segment could contribute in the most useful way to the work of your subsidiary body? Please include any specific idea or proposal (e.g. the segment could give visibility to some policy outcomes of your subsidiary body, promote implementation, recommend a specific issue to be addressed etc)
- Question 2: Which recommendations from the 2021 ministerial declaration¹⁵ of ECOSOC and the HLPF require further discussions in your subsidiary body during the 2022 session of the Council?
- Question 3: Could you share experiences on cooperation and coordination between your subsidiary body and other subsidiary bodies?
- Question 4: Could you identify coordination issues that may require further guidance by the Council based on the experience of 2021? For example,
- (a) in relation to the follow-up to the 2021 Ministerial Declaration
 - (b) in relation to the policy issues to be discussed in sessions of the subsidiary bodies during the 2022 session of the Council
 - (c) in relation to possible linkages among subsidiary bodies and/or with Governing Bodies of UN entities?
- Question 5: How will your subsidiary body address the 2022 theme of ECOSOC and the HLPF?
- Question 6: What do you expect will be the key policy areas addressed by your subsidiary bodies in contributing to the 2022 thematic review of the HLPF?
- Question 7: Is there scope to work jointly with other subsidiary bodies and/or UN agencies and partners to consider policy issues that are of mutual interest or that are cross-cutting?
- Question 8: If there is a cross-cutting panel on data in the Coordination Segment, would your subsidiary body be willing to contribute and make a short dynamic, visual presentation about it? If so, please provide a short explanation of the project/discussion/ recommendation/ joint initiative and support documentation.
- Question 9: How has your subsidiary body addressed the following action areas identified in the Political Declaration¹⁶ of the 2019 SDG Summit:
- Leaving no one behind
 - Mobilizing adequate and well-directed financing

¹⁵ <https://undocs.org/en/E/HLS/2021/1>

¹⁶ <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/74/4>

- Enhancing national implementation
 - Strengthening institutions for more integrated solutions
 - Bolstering local action to accelerate implementation
 - Reducing disaster risk and building resilience
 - Solving challenges through international cooperation and enhancing the global partnership
 - Harnessing science, technology and innovation with a greater focus on digital transformation for sustainable development
 - Investing in data and statistics for the Sustainable Development Goals
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