



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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Programme of work for the biennium 2023-2024

Proposal for new work on unaddressed hazard classes in the programme of work for the biennium 2023-2024

Transmitted by the European Union*

Background

1. At the forty-second session of the Sub-Committee, the representative of the European Union highlighted in informal document INF.17¹, some hazards currently not identified at global level, limiting adequate measures to protect users, consumers and the environment; and informed the Sub-Committee about their intention to submit a proposal for new items to be included in the programme of work for the biennium 2023-2024.
2. Following the presentation of the envisaged timeline, some experts felt that the proposal to address several endpoints simultaneously within the given timeframe was too ambitious, while others supported the proposal². Concerns were voiced about the additional workload, while ensuring progress of on-going work.
3. On the approach to follow, several experts expressed their preference to entrust the work to a GHS informal correspondence group, while ensuring the involvement of the “Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). However, they did not fully exclude the possibility to mandate some of the work to the OECD as the Sub-Committee’s focal point on environment and health hazards.
4. Based on the feedback received, an adjusted proposal is hereby presented for the Sub-Committee’s consideration and adoption of “unaddressed hazard classes” as an agenda item for the programme of work for the biennium 2023-2024.

* A/75/6 (Sect.20), para. 20.51.

¹ <https://unece.org/sites/default/files/2022-06/UN-SCEGHS-42-INF17e.pdf>

² Refer to the report of the Sub-Committee on its forty-second session (document ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/84, paragraphs 42 to 47).

Section 1: Proposed scope and organisation of the work

5. The proposed scope of work for the biennium 2023-2024 would cover the following hazard classes: endocrine disruptors (ED) for human health and the environment; persistent, bioaccumulative, toxic (PBT); very persistent, very bioaccumulative (vPvB); persistent, mobile, toxic (PMT); and very persistent, very mobile (vPvM).

6. Initially, the Sub-Committee would address PBT/vPvB substances and PMT/vPvM substances. Existing OECD test guidelines used for these parameters and related criteria⁴ are well established in many regions, especially for persistency and bioaccumulation. Therefore, it should be feasible that the Sub-Committee starts the work on these aspects rather quickly via an informal correspondence group on unaddressed hazard classes.

7. The Sub-Committee would also start working on endocrine disruptors (for both humans and environmental species) as defined by the World Health Organisation. The technical discussion would require addressing topics such as the test methods and several types of effects, like obesity, for which a conceptual framework for testing and assessment is not available, yet. It is suggested, therefore, to mandate the OECD to work, via an OECD informal working group, on such aspects during the biennium 2023-2024 and following ones, as necessary⁵. The outcome of the OECD work would then provide the basis for the work of the GHS informal correspondence group on unaddressed hazard classes.

8. Finally, it is expected that by the end of the biennium 2023-2024, the European Union will be able to provide a detailed and robust assessment of the state of science for immunotoxic and neurotoxic substances, as well as substances toxic to terrestrial organisms. If a need for new hazard classes or more specific criteria inside the existing classes is identified, this could be discussed by the Sub-Committee that may then agree on the inclusion of these hazards in the programme of work for future biennia.

9. Additional information on the scope and organisation of work may be submitted to the Sub-Committee prior to the forty-third session of the Sub-Committee in an informal document. The information is expected to include the European Union criteria for the hazard classes referred to in paragraph 8 above which are currently under preparation.

Section 2: creation of an informal correspondence group on “unaddressed hazard classes”

10. The proposed scope and organisation of work presented in previous paragraphs imply the creation of a new informal correspondence group on unaddressed hazard classes. Terms of reference and workplan of such informal correspondence group for the biennium 2023-2024 are presented in the following paragraphs. However, the European Union may submit complementary information prior to the Sub-Committee’s forty-third session.

Terms of reference

11. The overall goal of the informal correspondence group on unaddressed hazard classes is to develop new criteria/hazard classes based on scientific knowledge and progress achieved since the establishment of the GHS.

12. The following draft terms of reference are proposed:

- (a) To develop new criteria/hazard class for endocrine disruptors. This includes defining the mandate to OECD, as well as monitoring and reporting to the Sub-Committee on the advancement of work on endocrine disruptors.

⁴ E.g., the [assessment of persistence and bioaccumulation, Test. 312 – Leaching in Soil Columns](#).

⁵ The details of such mandate could be defined by the informal correspondence group on unaddressed hazard classes.

- (b) To elaborate criteria/hazard class for PBT/vPvB substances and PMT/vPvM substances.

Workplan

13. During the biennium 2023-2024 the following tasks are proposed for the informal correspondence group on unaddressed hazard classes:

- (a) To define by mid-2023 the scope of the mandate to OECD on the science needed to identify endocrine disruptors (EDs). While the IPCS/WHO definition of EDs is generic, GHS often provides detailed criteria, taking account of different types of information and available tests. Considering the state of science in testing chemicals for ED properties, the OECD mandate could focus on the currently well-described ED-related pathways, such as oestrogen-, androgen-, thyroid- and steroid modalities in both humans and the wildlife. The work by the OECD informal working group may extend beyond the end of 2024, depending on the progress of discussions. This task might, therefore, continue in the next biennium.
- (b) To elaborate criteria for PBT/vPvB substances and PMT/vPvM substances. It is suggested to focus first on persistency and toxicity (as common properties to hazards under definition); and then on bioaccumulation and mobility. It is estimated to conclude the work on the former by the end of the 2023, and to conclude the work on the latter by end of 2024.
- (c) To propose, if necessary, revised terms of reference and workplan of the informal correspondence group, based on progress of the work⁶.

14. The work of the informal correspondence group on unaddressed hazard classes could be organised by the European Commission.

Proposal

15. The Sub-Committee is invited to adopt the proposed work item on “unaddressed hazard classes” for the programme of work for the biennium 2023-2024.

16. The Sub-Committee is also invited to consider the proposal to organise the work of the informal correspondence group on unaddressed hazard classes delivering on the proposed work item.

⁶ The European Union could provide by the end of the biennium 2023-2024 an assessment on immunotoxic and neurotoxic substances, as well as substances toxic to terrestrial organisms for discussion with experts on whether or not to add them in the future terms of reference and workplan of the informal correspondence group on unaddressed hazard classes.