



COMPENDIUM OF CANADA'S ENGAGEMENT IN INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS AND INSTRUMENTS

Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management

SUBJECT CATEGORY:

Chemicals & Wastes

TYPE OF AGREEMENT / INSTRUMENT:

Multilateral

FORM:

Voluntary International Framework

STATUS:

- A Voluntary Policy Framework endorsed by Heads of State in New York in 2005.
- Dubai Declaration on International Chemicals Management and the Overarching Policy Strategy (OPS) adopted February 6, 2006.
- Expiry Date: 2020
- The global community is developing recommendations on SAICM and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 for consideration by the Fifth International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5). Conclusion of this process has been delayed by the global COVID-19 pandemic.

LEAD & PARTNER DEPARTMENTS:

Lead: Health Canada

Partners: Environment and Climate Change Canada, Pest Management Regulatory Agency, Global Affairs Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada, as well as other federal departments etc.)

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:**Web Links:**

- [SAICM](#) internet site
- [Text of SAICM](#)
- [UNEP SAICM Implementation](#)
- [World Health Organization \(WHO\) / Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals \(IOMC\)](#)

Contacts:

[Health Canada Enquiry Centre](#)

COMPENDIUM EDITION:

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PLAIN LANGUAGE SUMMARY

SAICM is a voluntary international policy framework to support multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder efforts toward the global goal of sound chemicals management by 2020. SAICM is also distinguished by its comprehensive scope emphasis on chemical safety as a sustainable development issue; and formal endorsement or recognition at the highest political levels. Canada is playing a leadership role both as SAICM Regional Focal point for Western Europe and Other Governments participating on the SAICM Bureau, as one of the few Health Sector National Focal Points promoting health sector engagement in international chemicals management, and was Co-Chair of the Intersessional Process to consider SAICM and the sound management of waste beyond 2020 (2016-2021). Canada stepped down from this role in Dec 2021 but remains committed to the process.

OBJECTIVE

SAICM is an international policy framework to foster the sound management of chemicals worldwide and, specifically, to support the goal agreed to at the 2002 Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development "to ensure that, by 2020, chemicals will be produced and used in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on the environment and human health using transparent science-based risk assessment procedures and science-based risk management procedures, taking into account the precautionary approach".

The Overarching Policy Strategy (OPS) outlines 5 objectives: Risk Reduction; Improved Knowledge and Information; Improved Governance; Increased Capacity-building and technical cooperation; Reduction of Illegal international traffic.

KEY ELEMENTS

Voluntary Policy Framework, Multi-stakeholder, Multi-sectoral nature: The involvement of all relevant sectors and stakeholders, including at the local, national, regional and global levels.

SAICM is composed of three texts:

- The Dubai Declaration – a high level statement expressing commitment from government, civil society and the private sector;
- The Overarching Policy Strategy – sets out the scope, principles, objectives and implementation in greater detail;
- The Global Plan of Action – a list of over 250 potential work areas and activities.

SAICM has a very broad scope which includes:

- all chemical substances - agricultural and industrial chemicals as well as toxic metals.
- the management of chemicals at every stage of their life-cycle – production, use, recovery and re-use, and end of life, including the presence of chemicals in products.
- all environmental, economic, social, health and labour aspects of chemical safety.

The implementation of SAICM is overseen and monitored by the International Conference on Chemicals Management (the Conference or ICCM), a global forum which includes governments, international organizations, industry groups, public interest associations, labour organizations, scientific associations and representatives of civil society. However, decision-making is limited to government officials. The ICCM met every three years up to 2015. ICCM5 was planned for 2020 but due to the global COVID-19 pandemic is now tentatively rescheduled to 2023.

One of the functions of the ICCM as identified in the SAICM Overarching Policy Strategy (paragraph 24.j) is to call for appropriate action on emerging policy issues (EPIs) as they arise and to forge consensus on priorities for cooperative action.

Another key component of SAICM was the Quick Start Program (QSP), which was put in place to support initial capacity-building activities for the implementation of SAICM objectives in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. QSP was a voluntary, time-limited trust fund, administered by UNEP initially until 2013 but extended to 2015.

EXPECTED RESULTS

SAICM's overall goal is the achievement of the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle so that, by 2020, chemicals are produced and used in ways that minimize significant adverse impacts on human health and the environment.

To measure progress, a set of 20 indicators falling under the 5 Overarching Policy Strategy objective areas

were developed against which countries report progress toward the 2020 goal.

CANADA'S INVOLVEMENT

Canada participates in SAICM because it has real potential to contribute to global chemical safety:

- International policy cohesion for chemical and waste issues
- synergies / identify gaps / leverage intergovernmental agencies' work
- Agreed procedure to identify and prioritize emerging issues
- Targeted work programmes to achieve practical outcomes
- Unique interdisciplinary, multi-sectoral international forum for discussions on chemicals
- Voluntary and non-binding policy framework

Canada delivers on its WSSD 2020 commitments domestically primarily through the [Chemicals Management Plan](#).

As well, our involvement in multilateral and bilateral activities contributes to enhancing collaboration and sharing of expertise based on our domestic experience.

Canada also supports implementation of SAICM by:

- Providing in-kind support via provision of information/ expertise to SAICM emerging policy issues.
- Initiating and co-sponsoring resolution WHA69.4 to promote health sector engagement in the sound management of chemicals, which was accepted at the 69th World Health Assembly (WHA) in 2016.
- Supporting WHO to develop a road map for health sector engagement – a key outcome of WHA69.4.
- Providing funding to support the WHO's Global Chemicals and Health Network.
- Being the Western Europe and other Countries Regional Representative on the Steering Committee for the Chemicals in Products initiative.
- Participating in ICCM Bureau meetings as Regional Focal Point for the Western Europe and other Countries Group.
- Former co-chair for the intersessional process to consider SAICM and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 (2016-2021).

RESULTS / PROGRESS

Activities

Canada is on target to achieve its national 2020 targets through implementation of our Chemicals Management Plan.

Reports

ICCM4 adopted an [Orientation and Guidance Document](#) calling on all stakeholders to pursue additional initiatives to make progress towards the 2020 goal.

In addition, recognizing the need to start considering arrangements for the period beyond 2020, ICCM4 initiated an independent evaluation of SAICM as well as an intersessional process to prepare recommendations on SAICM beyond 2020 to be considered at the Fifth International Conference on Chemicals Management (originally scheduled for 2020; postponed due to the global COVID-19 pandemic; new tentative date 2023)..

Results

From a global perspective, there is general consensus that SAICM has helped increase awareness of chemicals as a multi-sectoral issue and fostered coordination of chemicals related issues in several international institutions and programs. Similarly, the

ICCM has provided an overarching policy forum to facilitate global dialogue and has helped enhance coherence and focus of stakeholders on the common elements needed for the sound management of chemicals.

At the regional and national levels, SAICM has helped raise the profile of the importance of chemicals management and provided a platform and opportunities for regions to identify and discuss common challenges and share relevant information in support of the SAICM goal, and for nations to set their own 2020 targets, with the Quick Start Programme providing funding to help enable less developed countries set and meet their own chemicals management goals.

Looking at the contribution to specific issues, SAICM has helped galvanise focus on issues of common concern (i.e. "emerging policy issues") and has fostered improved coordination amongst international organisations in implementation of their activities on the sound management of chemicals.