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**COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE  
TRANSPORT OF DANGEROUS GOODS**

**(Twentieth session,  
Geneva, 7-16 December 1998,  
agenda item 3 (a)(iv))**

**GLOBAL HARMONIZATION OF SYSTEMS OF CLASSIFICATION  
AND LABELLING OF CHEMICALS**

**Labelling and hazard communication systems**

**ILO Working Group for the Harmonization of  
Chemical Hazard Communication**

**Note by the Secretariat**

1. The representative of the International Labour Office (ILO) informed the Sub-Committee of Experts on the Transport of Dangerous Goods at its fifteenth session (see ST/SG/AC.10/C.3/30/, para. 182) that his organization had approved the establishment of a working group on the harmonization of chemical hazard communication systems, and that that group had held its first meeting in London, on 22 June 1998, to consider its mandate and programme of work.
2. The Terms of Reference developed by the ILO Working Group are reproduced hereafter.

## **INTER-ORGANIZATION PROGRAMME FOR THE SOUND MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS**

### **Coordinating Group for the Harmonization of Chemical Classification Systems (CG/HCCS)**

### **ILO Working Group for the Harmonisation of Chemical Hazard Communication**

#### **TERMS OF REFERENCE**

##### **Introduction**

1. As part of its ongoing commitment to support the development of a Globally Harmonised System (GHS) for the classification and labelling of chemicals, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) has established a Working Group on Harmonization of Chemical Hazard Communication (WG/HCHC).

2. This work was requested by the IOMC CG/HCCS at its 11th Consultation (November 1997, Ottawa), and was endorsed by the Governing Body of the ILO at its 271<sup>st</sup> Session in March 1998. The ILO will provide the Secretariat for the Working Group, and completion of the task is scheduled for the year 2000. The following terms of reference establish the participation in the group; the scope of the effort; the general principles under which the work will be done; the procedures and reporting requirements; and work plans.

##### **Participation**

3. The composition of the Working Group, as agreed at the 11th Consultation of the CG/HCCS and endorsed by the Governing Body of the ILO, includes: Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, Germany, India, Japan, The Netherlands, the Russian Federation, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States, with four experts representing Employers and four experts representing Workers. Observers will include the International Maritime Organisation, the International Civil Aviation Organisation, the European Commission, the UN CETDG, the OECD and two international non-governmental organisations concerned with consumer and environmental safety.

4. The participation of experts to address specific issues is not precluded. All parties not directly involved in the Working Group will have the opportunity to provide input into the work through the IOMC CG/HCCS, and it is expected that other observers may also wish to attend the meetings. [This will be permitted]. However, the Chair of the Working Group [is given the authority to] will have the authority to decide whether these additional observers may speak or otherwise participate directly in the deliberations. It is expected that such participation would generally be permitted as long as it does not interfere with the discussions or the conduct of the meetings as a whole.

## Scope of Work

5. The scope of work is:

**“to develop a harmonised system of hazard communication, taking into consideration comprehensibility factors as well as the differing needs of the various target groups and sectors. “**

6. The Working Group will examine the means used in existing systems to communicate information to those exposed to hazardous chemicals or products, and develop a harmonised approach to hazard communication. The following principles will apply:

- (a) the terms of reference for the IOMC CG/HCCS will apply to the work of this Working Group;
- (b) the hazard communication provisions will be based on the technical criteria developed by the focal points for health, environmental and physical hazards;
- (c) the results of the survey of workplace systems conducted by the CG/HCCS informal work group on hazard communication, as well as the literature search on comprehensibility and effectiveness, will be used by the Working Group as background information; and
- (d) the harmonised approach to hazard communication will address the essential tools of chemical hazard communication common to the major existing systems, namely:

**Labels** - (including their definition, use and form; decision logic for determining the content of a label, such as degree of hazard, precedence of hazards, and possible consideration of elements of risk in some use settings; the various components of labels, including symbols, warning statements, essential information, colours, size and format.)

**Safety Data Sheets** - including their design, format and content.

## General Principles

7. In developing proposals, the Working Group will consider the following :

- (a) the comprehensibility, accuracy and completeness of the information to be provided, making full use of the results of available research on the effectiveness of hazard communication;
- (b) the needs of the target audience (such as employers, workers, consumers and the general public, including those in developing countries) at the various stages of the life cycle of the chemical product;

- (c) the acknowledgement of the important role of education and training for the target audience and for the authorities responsible for implementation;
- (d) recognition of the need for appropriate guidance to apply the harmonised system;
- (e) the need to ensure the safety and health of workers, consumers and the public in general, as well as the protection of the environment;
- (f) the need to facilitate international trade and protect confidential business information as prescribed by the competent authorities, so long as [public] the health and safety of workers, the public and the environment is not compromised;
- (g) the question of compatibility with existing international instruments such as ILO Convention 170 and Recommendation 177 and other sectoral agreements such as those governing transport;
- (h) the preference for a system that is simple and easy to apply; and
- (i) the need to incorporate some consideration of risk in communication to certain target audiences.

### **Procedural & Reporting Arrangements**

8. The Working Group will make through a consensus process. Progress will be reported periodically to the IOMC CG/HCCS, the Governing Body of the ILO and other focal points; the information will be subsequently transmitted to the IOMC IOCC and to the Secretariat of the IFCS.

9. Meetings will generally be held at least twice a year. The length of the meetings will vary dependent on the time needed to address the issues currently being deliberated, but will generally be expected to be 1-3 days in duration. The meetings will as far as possible be scheduled back-to-back with the CG/HCCS meetings, in order to reduce travel costs for those people who are members of both groups. Papers to be discussed at a meeting will be normally made available 6 weeks in advance, and will be made more widely available via the IOMC CG/HCCS web site on harmonisation .

10. The Secretariat will develop and maintain a timeline and tracking system for the work to be completed by the Working Group. Any work performed by a consultant will be supervised by the Chair and the Secretariat.

### **Workplan Elements**

11. The Working Group shall carry out technical work on the basis of:

- a Step 1 Document - reviewing the current state of the topic ;
  - a Step 2 Document proposing options for harmonisation;
  - a Step 3 Document defining agreed harmonised options, aiming for completion by the year 2000.
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