

STATEMENT BY SOUTH AFRICA AT THE INTERACTIVE THEMATIC DISCUSSIONS ON CHEMICALS AT THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PREPARATORY MEETING FOR THE NINETEENTH SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

New York, 28 February – 4 March 2011

Thank you Mr Chair,

South Africa would like to thank the panelists for their informative presentations and we wish to associate ourselves with the views of G77 and China. South Africa has signed and ratified the Stockholm Convention, and acceded to the Rotterdam and Basel Conventions as well as the Montreal Protocol. We have a range of legislative instruments that are aimed at giving effect to these Multilateral Environmental Agreements but some of these are yet to be translated into domestic policy. Such domestic policy will strengthen the work undertaken by the National Multi-stakeholder Committee for Chemicals Management meant to facilitate co-ordination in respect of implementation of the MEAs.

There are still major challenges to chemicals management that remain unresolved, and we propose the following:

- a) To address the shortage of expertise, equipment and its associated costs to conduct comprehensive risk assessment, appropriate technology transfer, capacity building and adequate funding are needed in developing countries.
- b) South Africa is of the view that the implementation of the Globally Harmonized System of classification and labelling of chemicals, at the national, regional and international levels, in a manner that is aligned with the precautionary approach will help greatly to facilitate environmental sound management of chemicals. We believe it is crucial that relevant information is made available to all users of chemicals, communities and policy makers. This will prevent and reduce the frequency of incidents, particularly in rural areas where communities are most vulnerable.
- c) In addition to the urgent need for efficient global action; regional agreements could further advance the environmental sound management of chemicals to prevent efforts of one country being negated by neighbours due to long and porous borders.
- (d) A centralized chemical information system accessible to all stakeholders including small

and medium sized enterprises, and the region as a whole, is needed to address information gaps, as well as for the purposes of monitoring and evaluation. This will contribute to improved knowledge and awareness of the risks posed by chemicals.

To address these challenges, there is a greater need for technology transfer, dedicated financial support, and capacity building, to enable developing countries to make informed decisions as early as possible in their efforts towards life cycle management of chemicals. We believe the existing funding streams for chemicals need to be increased in order to make a significant difference, and should primarily aim to assist countries in meeting their obligations regarding the implementation of MEAs on environmental sound management of chemicals.

In conclusion and closer to home, we suggest that as CSD, we should emulate the chemicals and waste MEAs and consider moving towards having electronic meetings to avoid as much as is possible using chemicals and generating volumes of waste in printing meeting documents; in turn this will reduce the associated costs.

I thank you Mr Chair

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