

Chemical Dialogue: 2022 Report to AMM on Implementation Convergence of the GHS in APEC Economies

Executive Summary

Since its adoption in 2002, the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (or GHS) has been identified as one of the main tools to achieve sound management of chemicals and its implementation is consistently an issue on the international sustainable development agenda. The GHS is an internationally agreed-upon system created by the United Nations. It is designed to replace the various classification and labelling standards used in different economies by using consistent criteria for classification and labelling on a global level.

Consistent implementation of the GHS will not only reduce costs of doing business internationally but will also promote health and environmental safety and enable APEC member economies to boost economic growth while addressing the region's environmental challenges.

In 2022, the Chemical Dialogue (CD) conducted an annual survey to identify information that may assist in convergent implementation of GHS across the region. Based on the responses to the Survey, in accordance with 2021's outcomes, the APEC Economies are working towards some aspects of convergent implementation of GHS, primarily the basic elements of classifications, SDS formats, and labelling. Certain types of assessment for supporting policy decision-making are also commonly exercised.

Regardless of some divergence, the benefits of broad GHS implementation are generally recognized within the markets of all APEC members and international practices. Therefore, advanced collaboration across the APEC region is required to achieve better alignment, given certain obstacles¹ exist to prevent economies from mutual acceptance and trade facilitation to the maximum extent permitted.

CD Efforts in 2021/2022: The CD initiated a comparative study and impact analysis of various elements of GHS to support a broader acceptance. The planned capacity building webinars and GHS convergence proposal are intended to provide examples and build trust by raising awareness of GHS differences in implementations. Broader acceptance of building blocks is encouraged provided there is no downgrade of protection and safety information.

Next Steps and Requested Actions: The CD seeks a request from APEC Ministers that officials promote consistency of GHS implementation by encouraging economies to:

- Recognize the possible obstacles identified by member economies drawn from the Survey replies;
- Continue to participate in the annual Survey to promote mutual understanding;

¹ **Examples of obstacles identified in the GHS survey for implementing mutual acceptance principles:** Increased complexity for implementation and enforcement. Additional resources required. Keeping up with latest revisions of GHS.

- Support the initiatives and projects to implement the four recommendations² in the 2021 summary report by collaborating in the development of the GHS convergence proposal and capacity building event(s) for finding consensus of resolutions of GHS convergence.

² **1)** Consider addressing the obstacles to adopting later revisions; **2)** Consider accepting later revisions, provided that the level of protection is the same or stronger with respect to a particular chemical; **3)** Consider accepting classifications based on building blocks that have not been adopted by the economy as long as all the adopted building blocks are included in the classification; **4)** Consider initiating conversations about best practice for GHS implementation for better mutual understanding of the rationales and improved addressing of differences.