



ADVICE TO COUNCIL: NO. 02-08

Re: Capacity Building and Education Opportunities within the Sound Management of Chemicals (SMOC) Program

The Joint Public Advisory Committee (JPAC) of the Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) of North America:

IN ACCORDANCE with Article 16(4) of the North American Agreement on Environmental Cooperation (NAAEC), which states that JPAC “may provide advice to the Council on any matter within the scope of this agreement (...) and on the implementation and further elaboration of this agreement, and may perform such other functions as the Council may direct”;

RECALLING that JPAC, in its Advice to Council 01-08, advised Council it would be consulting the public on the education and capacity building opportunities that could be created through the Sound Management of Chemicals Program (SMOC) during the 2002 Regular Session of Council;

HAVING conducted two very successful public sessions on these topics in conjunction with this Regular Session of Council and having benefited from constructive thinking and useful comments, all aimed at improving our understanding of the complexities and challenges presented by efforts to develop effective capacity building and educational strategies;

UNDERSTANDING the importance of moving the discussion into more concrete recommendations for Council to consider;

JPAC offers the following advice for moving forward:

- Efforts to improve capacity building and education within SMOC must go hand-in-hand. Capacity building cannot occur without public awareness and vice versa. Education and capacity building initiatives should be constructed as a result of dialogues between civil society and governments—not imposed from the top down. This will require some institutional changes in the way SMOC tasks are approached.
- As recommended in our earlier Advice to Council 01-08, the SMOC Working Group (currently made up exclusively of government representatives) and the various task forces should be more opened to broader stakeholder involvement. The group of stakeholders involved in the SMOC Working Group and task forces should be expanded to include ENGOs, industry and the private sector, and academics, as well as representatives from other levels of government and the public-at-large. In addition, a clear process should be

developed and articulated regarding how stakeholders are nominated and selected, and their responsibilities, roles and level of accountability should be clearly defined. This process must be fully transparent.

- Special efforts are required to seek out and engage local and traditional decision-making authorities who operate outside the framework of governments, as previously called for in Advice to Council 99-05. This is a necessary approach to working with indigenous peoples and other rural communities.
- The challenges for capacity building and education are not limited to any one country. Each country should set new and higher standards for capacity building and education, including evaluating and utilizing best practices and best available technologies and culturally appropriate formats.
- When determined by the relevant SMOC task forces that the use of particular substances should be limited or banned, it must be ensured that replacement substances are safe for human health and the environment. Increased public participation through capacity building and education can assist this effort.
- Financial resources may limit the extent to which the CEC and the SMOC program can undertake new initiatives in capacity building and education. It is very important, therefore, that SMOC collaborate with groups that have existing outreach networks, such as ENGOs, industry and the private sector, local governments, academia and indigenous organizations, professional associations, and other organizations involved with education, health and chemical substance pollution.
- Working with these networks will facilitate the identification of appropriate outreach materials and information to educate and involve civil society. These outreach tools should build on existing capacity, taking into account available information technology, education levels, local languages and cultural practices, and other factors that affect the ability of civil society to actively and effectively participate in the SMOC process. The progress towards total elimination of DDT in Mexico is a good example of this model where, through partnerships and cooperation at the regional and local level, people have been empowered through information and a common purpose to help themselves.

Other matters include:

- The SMOC program should become better informed and sensitized to requirements for a comprehensive approach to its work on substance selection, the development and implementation of NARAPs and monitoring and assessment activities that respond to the needs and realities of affected people and environments.
- The SMOC program should develop an effective process to monitor the disposition and fate of existing inventories of substances, such as DDT, whose use is being limited or banned.

- As previously detailed in Advice to Council 02-01 on Children's Health and the Environment in North America, the interface between the SMOC program and the initiative on children's health is crucial. In this regard, JPAC reiterates its call for the development of a NARAP on lead.
- The SMOC Working Group should continue efforts to secure funding from other sources to assist in supporting the costs of implementing NARAPs.

APPROVED ON 3 JULY 2002