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COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE TRANSPORT OF DANGEROUS GOODS AND ON THE GLOBALLY HARMONIZED SYSTEM OF CLASSIFICATION AND LABELLING OF CHEMICALS

Sub-Committee of Experts on the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals
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ENVIRONMENTAL HAZARDS

Technical points about some main environmental issues of the GHS

Transmitted by the expert from France

To avoid overlapping with the role of the Sub-Committee, the OECD does not have competence to propose modifications of the GHS with conceptual or political issues, but only scientific ones. Therefore, it is essential for France that the Sub-Committee analyses and takes into the account the latest developments of the OECD experts.

The aim of this document is to expose some French technical considerations that could help to increase the relevance and the coherence of the GHS criteria by suggesting some modifications, based on the current scientific elements presented in the various documents transmitted by OECD.

1. Chronic aquatic hazard category:

The expert from France welcome the very interesting conclusions presented in document ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2006/17 transmitted by OECD, and would like to highlight that the results obtained by acute toxicity data calculation or by chronic assays, are generally not equal but complementary.

If the “surrogate system” seems to be convenient and rational on many aspects, it must be also understood that taking into account non/poorly-degradable substances only does not address the issue properly. Indeed, a rapidly degradable substance (in other words, a very reactive substance) could generate at least one compound (metabolite), which could have degradation, bioaccumulation, or toxicity properties focused by the “surrogate system”.

For this reason, detailed in the OECD document, France deems it necessary that:

- chronic testing should be envisaged, since it integrates the toxicity of non/poorly-degradable/bioaccumulable substances and degradable substances containing metabolites that have properties of concern; and

- the “surrogate system” be used only because of lack of chronic data, which could not be filled by chronic testing; or if it is not appropriate to perform a test, account should be taken of any available information.

Clarification in that direction should be done in the core text of the GHS.

2. Issues in relation with aquatic hazards:

Concerning the chronic NOEC use for aquatic hazards:

The expert from France consider that it would be more useful to use chronic ECx and not only chronic NOEC, since ECx values:

- are independent from the selected range of concentrations;
- have usually a better accuracy than NOEC, especially if the range of concentrations is not appropriate (e.g.: selection of a high ratio between concentrations).

Concerning biodegradability criteria:

The expert from France would like to alert the GHS Sub-Committee of a possible inaccuracy in paragraph 4.1.2.10.3.

Rapid biodegradation parameters are defined in sub-paragraph (a). But sub-paragraph (c) could lead to suppose that we can conclude to a rapid-biodegradation based on intrinsic biodegradation property data. This approach seems to be less constraining, but not really relevant. Consequently, France considers that the wording of sub-paragraph (c) should be modified in order to remove any ambiguity.

3. Terrestrial hazard class:

In relation to OECD document “Issues to be addressed to develop the classification and labelling for terrestrial environmental hazards” (22 March 2004), France would like to reaffirm the need for a joint work during the biennium 2007-2008 for the definition of the terrestrial hazards classification criteria. The expert from France point out to the following conclusions in the OECD document:

- OECD guidelines on terrestrial effects, current or under way, can supply appropriate information for terrestrial hazards classification;
- terrestrial hazard assessment can be done independently of aquatic hazards;
- risk management/control measure must be envisaged because of the great difference of the ways of exposure and their consequences;
- it appears possible to establish process and criteria for terrestrial hazards classification so that they can be complementary with those for the aquatic environment;
- some systems already exist for some regulations, as the 91/414/CEE (phytopharmaceutical products) and 98/8/CEE (Biocides) European directives. As the use of chemicals is excluded of the GHS criteria, such dispositions should be analysed and partially implemented for all substances.

For these reasons, it is necessary to seek methodologies for terrestrial hazards, to be applied when they are relevant, having effective complementarities with aquatic hazards data, and not becoming excessively expensive.

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