

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

27 November 2017

Thirty-fourth session

Geneva, 6-8 December 2017

Item 7 of the provisional agenda

Other business

Work of informal working groups

Note by the Chair and Vice-chair persons

1. According to Rule 24, para.2 of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council applicable to its subsidiary bodies, the Sub-Committee may not create either standing or ad hoc intersessional subsidiary bodies without prior approval of the Council.
2. Working groups may be organized during sessions, but they are not provided with interpretation or secretariat services.
3. Informal intersessional working group meetings may be organized by Governments or non-governmental organizations, but the United Nations do not provide secretariat services. These groups may not take formal decisions. They may only submit their reports and proposals to the Sub-Committee.
4. Since its creation the Sub-Committee has relied on work done within informal intersessional working groups to develop proposals, when it considered that the difficulty of the subject required more time for detailed consideration than is available during the plenary sessions.
5. Some informal groups provide detailed information on the status of their work to the Sub-Committee on a regular basis, others provide a succinct summary report and wait until a final proposal has been agreed within the group to provide further details.
6. As regards meetings during the Sub-Committee sessions, the secretariat and the bureau have noted an increase in the demand for meeting time for informal working group meetings, particularly during the first and second sessions of a biennium. This has been accompanied by a significant reduction in the number of documents submitted for discussion in plenary.
7. The bureau and the secretariat recognise that presently the Sub-Committee is taking forward work in a number of challenging and highly technical areas, such as the review of Chapter 2.1 (explosives), use of non-animal testing methods for classification of health hazards, and assessing the possible development of a list of chemicals classified in accordance with the GHS. Progressing this type of work may require more working group time for an interim period. Nevertheless, the bureau and the secretariat have been considering how to better balance:
 - (a) the benefits of face-to-face communication in relatively small groups of experts on complex and sensitive issues.

- (b) the need to progress work outside the plenary sessions while keeping the Sub-Committee informed and securing the Sub-Committee's input and direction at key stages as the work progresses.
 - (c) the proper use of the resources allocated to the plenary sessions of the Sub-Committee.
8. In view of the above, and to provide a common framework for the work of all informal working groups, the bureau would like to propose the following arrangements:
- (a) informal working groups should try to progress work inter-sessionally, to the maximum extent possible
 - (b) each informal working group should submit a report, in writing, not later than two week(s) prior to the Sub-Committee session. The report should contain information about the progress achieved since the previous session (e.g. issues solved, matters still under consideration) as well as the agenda for the next meeting of the informal working group.
 - (c) when a meeting of the informal working group has been scheduled during the Sub-Committee session, the chairperson of the group will provide a summary of the outcome of the meeting and the follow-up actions. The report should be submitted preferably as an informal document. If this is not possible due to time constraints, the summary provided to the Sub-Committee orally during the plenary session should be made available to the secretariat in writing (e.g. by email or in handwriting) before the end of the day.
 - (d) exceptionally, and with the agreement of the Chairperson and the secretariat, a group may hold a meeting in plenary time, where this is necessary to make progress on issues likely to be of interest to the majority of Sub-Committee members and where a wider informal discussion would be helpful to secure consensus. This would have to be subject to time being available without disrupting formal Sub-Committee business.
9. The Sub-Committee is invited to consider the proposed arrangements in (a) to (d) above.
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