

Chapter 6

Toward Further Harmonization

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CHAPTER 6

Toward Further Harmonization

1. Vision and Strategy

The ASEAN Chemical Safety Database will significantly contribute to the economic integration of the region and strengthen chemical management in a less burdensome manner, as discussed in the previous chapters. However, it is also recognized that the database and the management body of the database will provide a great opportunity for further harmonization in the area of chemical management. Thus, further harmonization should be aimed for by revisiting the background of the idea proposed for the ASEAN Chemical Safety Datacenter and the AEC goals mentioned in the Chapter 4.

Therefore, in this chapter, a future vision for sound regional chemical management is discussed. Although this attempt may seem to be ambitious, this vision and the following strategy could contribute to promoting further harmonization in this region.

To consider the vision for sound regional chemical management, it is necessary to revisit the goal of the ASEAN Economic Community (AEC). The AEC's goal is economic integration, and concepts such as single market, equitable economic development, and integration into the global economy are mentioned as possible ways of achieving this goal. On the other hand, chemical management schemes may work against economic integration. For example, if the convergence of the Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) classification results is not adequately realized, this may hinder trade in the ASEAN region. In this context, the further utilization of the database and the management body should be considered as a potential way of achieving further harmonization or convergence of the chemical management scheme in this region.

Therefore, the vision for the future of regional chemical management could be stated simply, as follows:

“To achieve greater economic integration through chemical management”

To achieve this vision, the function of the database and management body should be discussed, and a deliberate strategy should be considered. Although this report does not contain a concrete strategy, several functions are discussed, and establishing an appropriate body is discussed. The strategy could include these ideas that have been discussed.

The followings are examples of functions that have been discussed, to be fulfilled by the body:

✓ **Technical Assistance**

This function was originally discussed as assistance in uploading or updating information added into the database. However, this area has a large potential for strengthening the capability to conduct risk assessment and management, using information gathered in the database. Moreover, policy advice for strengthening chemical management was also discussed.

✓ **GHS convergence**

The database will contain GHS classification results. It is widely recognized that GHS classification results differs due to various reasons, such as different building blocks, different sources of information, and different interpretation of test results. Thus, it may be useful to conduct case studies to understand the reason for the difference. Such case studies are considered to be useful to the convergence of GHS classification results.

✓ **One stop service**

The idea of this function is from the idea that the database will contain regulatory information. Exporters and investors to the region may need information regarding the regulation of chemicals in the region. If such inquiries are answered through the body, it will be convenient, and hence encourage trade and investment.

✓ **Providing chemical management tools (e.g. risk assessment tools)**

This function relates to the first function. It may be possible to conduct risk assessments using available information in the database. However, various chemical assessment tools, such as exposure models for risk assessment and QSARs, are already

available. Providing such tools with manuals, training, etc., may be useful for helping governments and industry.

Furthermore, a management body with the above functions requires an appropriate host organization. This is not in the scope of this study, but it should be carefully reviewed, because establishing a new independent organization is costly due to various reasons, including required management such as human resources, etc.. However, all the functions listed above are closely linked each other, and should be operated in a consistent manner. Thus, the management body of the database will be an appropriate body to work to achieve the vision described above. At that time in future, the body may be known as a center (i.e. “ASEAN chemical management research center” or “ASEAN chemical management promotion center”) if appropriate.

2. Criteria for Moving Forward

During the discussion regarding the future utilization of the management body, it was also discussed that, no matter how attractive and deliberate the strategy and vision seem to be, it is not appropriate to follow the primary strategy or move forward as originally planned. For the achievement of the vision, it is necessary to revisit or review the strategy in order to take the progress of the database project and changes of circumstances into account. From this point of view, the discussion of criteria for moving forward, including the criteria to establish a center as discussed in 6.1, may be useful for future consideration by the body or leaders in the region.

The followings are examples of the criteria for moving forward. If the criteria are satisfied, then moving to the new phase, including establishing a center, will become a realistic agenda to discuss.

- ✓ The development of the ASEAN Chemical Safety Database goes on as roadmap planned
- ✓ The appropriate management body of the ASEAN Chemical Safety Database is assigned, etc.
- ✓ (After the development of the Database) the ASEAN Chemical Safety Database is fully used and updated
- ✓ Appropriate business plan (including securing human and finance resources) to provide new functions is developed