

Chemical Dialogue: Report to Ministers on Implementation Convergence of the GHS in APEC Economies Executive Summary

Implementation of an internationally agreed system for the labelling and classification of chemicals would significantly facilitate trade in a sector that represents \$3.6 trillion in shipments and directly employs 11.7 million people in the APEC region. The APEC Chemical Dialogue (CD) has been promoting the consistent implementation of the Globally Harmonized System for the Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (“GHS”) since 2002 when the MRT endorsed the CD’s efforts to promote the widest possible GHS implementation by APEC member economies. GHS implementation also support trade facilitation and safety communication of disinfectors and essential chemicals for combating Covid-19 pandemic globally.

Implementation convergence of GHS is an ongoing joint effort in the region. Having identified implementation barriers arising out of information sharing challenges and divergent implementation, the CD developed a GHS Implementation Convergence Questionnaire (Questionnaire) for economies to identify impediments to convergent GHS implementation. The CD has historically submitted a summary of similar reports to the MRT on an annual basis and used the findings as the basis for its GHS workplan during the APEC year. The following represents the Chemical Dialogue’s 2019/20 GHS Convergence report.

CD Efforts in 2019/20: In response to the 2019 MRT Meeting (2019/MRT/006) encouraging CD’s continuous efforts to a new reporting mechanism focussing on strategies to improve GHS convergence and overcome identified divergences, the CD23 meeting in Puerto Varas, Chile sought comments on and later approved the 2020 GHS Implementation Questionnaire, and encouraged economies to complete the Questionnaire. The Questionnaire responses from CD economies has been analysed and this report provides the results that may assist member economies to enhance in convergent implementation of GHS across the region.

2020 Report: APEC Economies are working towards some aspects of convergent implementation of GHS. However, collaboration across the APEC region is required to achieve better alignment.

All except two Economies that are planning to adopt a later revision of GHS have identified the 7th revision as the revision to adopt. One Economy has foreshadowed plans to adopt the 8th revision of GHS by 2022, while another has identified 2024 as the next review date with no specific GHS revision number identified.

Economies	Current GHS revision	Future implementation	
		Revision	Timeline
Australia	3	7	2020
Indonesia	4	7	2021
Japan	6		2024
Malaysia	3	7	2022
Mexico	5		
Peru	Not adopted	7	2021
The Republic of the Philippines	4	8	2022
The Russian Federation	4	7	2021
Singapore	4	7	2021
Chinese Taipei	4	7	2020

Table 1: Details on participating economies

However, the economies' mechanisms of convergence, if exist, on the later revision of GHS was not aligned. Without stronger commitment and a plan forward, it will be unlikely to see that the same revision of GHS adopted across the APEC region at the same time.

The technical decisions relating to building blocks (i.e. the GHS hazard classes and categories) that are required by each Competent Authority before adoption of GHS contributes significantly to the divergent implementation of GHS. As there are several fora exist for discussing GHS implementation, regulators may work with each other to taking stock of work that is already occurring on GHS implementation, leverage work that is already done or in progress, and identify areas of further work that may be useful in a converging implementation of GHS to increase worker protection and ease trade across borders.

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

- Consider whether aligning GHS revision implementation timeframes is important to achieve convergence,
- Consider how GHS impacts on risk management controls in each economy and consider whether some lower hazard building blocks are necessary for best practice risk management,
- Consider allowing flexibility for classification for building blocks where subcategorization options exist in GHS,
- Consider the best use of resources by taking stock of work already occurring in other fora and identify areas of further work that may be useful in quantifiably achieving the two stated aims of implementing GHS – increased worker protection and ease of trade across borders.