



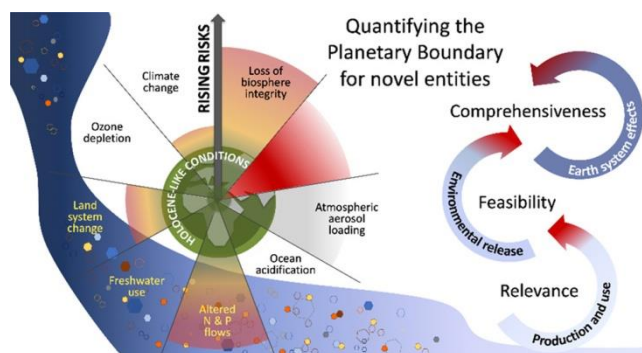
Novel Entities Update - 1



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Dear Friends,

Please recall that the Planetary Boundaries framework was updated in September 2023. This update pointed out that we have crossed six out of the 9 boundaries, and it also set the boundaries for the two limits, previously left unspecified: Aerosol Loading and Novel Entities. The limit for Novel Entities has been set at zero, as there is no Holocene background for these artificial compounds.



Naturally, a question arises, if so, what are we doing about it? The ‘Global Framework on Chemicals - for a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste’ provides an action plan. In this and subsequent editions, we plan to offer you a broad historical backdrop and a summary of our efforts in tackling this global issue.

At the Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development (2002), a set of goals were agreed, to be achieved by 2020. The main objective was to ensure that by 2020, all chemicals are produced and consumed “in ways that minimize significant adverse impacts on the environment and human health” throughout their lifecycle.

This was followed-up at the First International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM1) on 6 February 2006 in Dubai. All nations adopted the **Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)** at this conference. This is a policy framework to promote chemical safety around the world.

The principal features of **SAICM** are:

- comprehensive scope
- ambitious “2020 goal”
- multi-stakeholder and multi-sectoral character
- endorsement at the highest political levels
- emphasis on chemical safety as a sustainable issue
- provision for resource mobilization; and
- formal endorsement or recognition by the governing bodies of key intergovernmental organizations.

SAICM has five thematic objectives:

1. Risk reduction,
2. Knowledge and Information – generation and dissemination,

3. Effective Governance,
4. Capacity-building and technical cooperation; and
5. Regulation of Illegal international traffic.



However, in spite of the global consensus, the actual progress on these goals was far from satisfactory. Meanwhile, the global mandate accorded to SAICM expired in 2020. The SAICM secretariat announced the following:

Dear Stakeholders

On 30 September 2023, the Global Framework on Chemicals - for a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste was adopted, as a successor to SAICM.

We invite you to visit the website of the Framework at www.chemicalsframework.org.

This new website includes information transferred from the SAICM website.

The SAICM website will not be further updated.

Secretariat

We reproduce below some relevant details from the ‘SAICM Factsheet’:

The Challenge

The SAICM mandate expires in 2020, long before we will reach the target of minimizing the health and environmental impacts of chemicals throughout their lifecycle. Overall progress has been uneven and there is still a significant need for development and implementation of effective chemical and waste management policies and practices around the globe.

What we do

SAICM provides a valuable multi-stakeholder forum to discuss and address the many challenges facing the adoption and implementation of national policies to safely manage chemicals. SAICM is an ambitious initiative and is unique in its set up as an inclusive voluntary global policy framework on the sound management of chemicals across the lifecycle. It has provided space and opportunity for government and non-government actors alike, to discuss and deliberate on the management of chemicals throughout their lifecycle, within an atmosphere of relative trust and cooperation.

Examples of existing challenges related to production and use of chemicals across the lifecycle

1. Daily purchases such as clothing, toys, textiles and electronics lack transparency in the lifecycle of products. This hinders consumers from making informed decisions about goods they buy.
2. Highly hazardous pesticides have been linked to various human diseases including cancer. Only 25% of developing countries have regulations for pesticides.
3. Endocrine disrupting chemicals which are found in some everyday consumer products interfere with fertility as well as hormone receptors.
4. When it comes to nanomaterials, science and proper toxicological testing are important elements of having products in the market.

Source: <https://www.saicm.org/Portals/12/Documents/SAICM-Factsheet.pdf>

The next part of the blog is based upon the **Summary Report** of the 5th International Conference on Chemicals Management held between 23–29 September 2023. Here is a glimpse of the complex negotiation processes:

“At 10:20 am on Saturday morning, 30 September 2023, the remaining exhausted delegates who had worked through the night and into the morning cheered as they formally adopted the new global framework for the integrated management of chemicals and waste, the Global Framework on Chemicals – For a planet free of harm from chemicals and waste. The fifth International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5) finally came to a successful conclusion over 16 hours after its scheduled end. A visibly moved ICCM5 President Anita Breyer, who had overseen a fraught final plenary session where the final text was cleaned up and agreed upon, repeatedly thanked delegates for keeping the faith.”

Similar resistance was faced in finalising the preceding political statement, known as the **‘Bonn Declaration’**. The three major topics of contention were: the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), technology transfer “on mutually agreed terms,” and the polluter pays principle.

“Throughout the week, many spoke of the heavy toll—especially on the most vulnerable populations—from the unsustainable use of chemicals and waste. With the new instrument, there is hope that the stage has been set for renewed multi-stakeholder collaboration at all levels to address these challenges.”

The Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC) is divided into 12-parts with 12 resolutions and has three annexes. Together they provide the rationale, targets, and actions necessary for arresting the menace of chemicals.

The Framework assists and promotes cooperation between a broad cross-section of stakeholders: governments, international technical agencies, civil society, and the private sector. They can help to

- phase out the most harmful chemicals,
- strengthen capacity building, and
- create better linkages across diverse sectors

The major sectors are: health and occupational safety, trade, agriculture, energy, and transport. The 'Framework' offers important targets on export prohibition and guidelines.

Several multi-stakeholder alliances were established or reaffirmed at the Conference. They include:

- Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC)
- Global Alliance on Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs).

In order to facilitating implementation by heavy users in key sectors like textiles and construction, special initiatives are planned.

All stakeholders now have a concrete tool with which to raise the profile of chemicals and waste issues at the UN General Assembly and other global fora.

ICCM5 convened in Bonn, Germany, from 25-29 September 2023. It was preceded by the second resumed session of the Fourth Meeting of the Intersessional Process (IP4) on 23-24 September, which continued its negotiations on the new Global Framework.



In our next blog, we shall cover the historical milestones leading to the present 'Framework'.

