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United Nations Institute for Training and Research

# **Strengthening National Capacities to Address Nanotechnology and Manufactured Nanomaterials**

Project Information Note on Pilot Projects in 3 Countries  
(February 2012)

## **Background**

Nanotechnology and manufactured nanomaterials ("nano") is an exciting new field that can promise a broad array of benefits to humans and our environment. However, with these benefits come potential risks that, to-date, are not fully known.

In Resolution II/4 of the second session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM2), Governments and other stakeholders adopted a resolution, which comprises (in part) the following language: "[ICCM-2]...encourages Governments and other stakeholders to assist developing countries and countries with economies in transition to enhance their capacity to use and manage nanotechnologies and manufactured nanomaterials responsibly, to maximize potential benefits and to minimize potential risks" (see ICCM-2 report, SAICM/ICCM.2/15, advance copy of 27 May 2009).

UNITAR's objective, within the framework of the IOMC, is to raise awareness on the topic of nano in countries, as well as considering the implications for developing and transition countries with regard to nano-based and nano-containing products being traded across borders, into jurisdictions where there is little or no capacity to address them.

## **Initial Activities to Develop Awareness at the Regional Level**

Initial activities commenced in late 2009 and in 2010 with a first round of global regional awareness-raising workshops for all developing and transition countries held in the UN regions of Asia-Pacific, Africa, Latin America and Caribbean, Central and Eastern European, and the Arab region.

The main aim of this first round of workshops involving government, industry and civil society representatives was to raise awareness of nanotechnology, its current and potential applications and the possible human health and environmental safety implications associated with the use of nanomaterials. An additional objective was to ensure that developing countries and economies in transition would be able to participate, in an informed way, in discussions at the third session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management in 2012. The workshops were supported by the Governments of Switzerland, Sweden, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America.

These awareness-raising workshops were then followed by a second round of regional workshops in mid-2011, which were unanimously requested by countries and also

involved over 200 participants, supported by the Government of Switzerland (for more information, see: <http://www.unitar.org/nano>).

### **National Pilot Projects**

With the success of the regional workshops, UNITAR initiated in late 2011 pilot projects to assist three developing countries to develop programmatic capacities to tackle nanotechnology issues at the national level. Initial results and lessons learned from the projects in Nigeria, Thailand, and Uruguay will be considered by the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM-3) at its third session in September 2012.

The pilot projects aim to increase awareness on nano safety as a key tool for protecting human health and the environment with a need to address human resource development issues regarding nano safety, as well as the broader need to strengthen national capacities for management of chemicals in line with Chapter 19 of Agenda 21 and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). The projects will consider how to integrate nano-related safety management into pre-existing programmes for the sound management of chemicals at the national level and to strengthen capacities to address nanotechnology and manufactured nanomaterials. They will include the following types of activities:

- Awareness raising with the participation of all stakeholders
- Development of a national “nano assessment”
- Identification of national nano safety priorities
- Developing elements of a national nano safety policy with stakeholders
- Training on nano safety

### **Support Provided by UNITAR**

In support of nationally executed activities, UNITAR will provide technical support, facilitate access to a network of international nano experts, and provide a financial grant for country activities. UNITAR has developed guidance and training materials to ensure that the participating countries are aware of the current state of the nanotechnology field, as well as the possible actions that can be taken at the national level to begin to address this important new field of chemicals management.

### **Donor Contribution to Nano Pilots**

The three nano pilot projects are funded by the Government of Switzerland.



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft  
Confédération suisse  
Confederazione Svizzera  
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Confederation

## Contact Information

UNITAR  
Chemicals and Waste Management Programme  
Palais des Nations  
CH-1211 Geneve 10  
Switzerland  
FAX: +41 22 917 80 47  
E-mail: [nano@unitar.org](mailto:nano@unitar.org)  
Website: [www.unitar.org/cwm](http://www.unitar.org/cwm)