

National Implementation Strategy

1 CONTEXT

The context for the proposed National Implementation Strategy for the Globally Harmonised System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) in South Africa is set below.

Purpose: The proposed National Implementation Strategy has been developed in order to provide a sound basis to implement the GHS in South Africa. The Strategy serves as a framework within which all stakeholders can play their appropriate roles in the implementation of the GHS.

Scope: The National Implementation Strategy addresses the gaps identified in the present system of classification of, and communication about, hazardous chemicals in South Africa (the outcomes of Phase 2 of the GHS Study) in order to comply with all the requirements of the GHS (as set out in the latest GHS document, viz. UN Document ST/SG/AC.10/C.4/2002/16 of December 2002, which was formally adopted during July 2003). The Strategy defines and provides detail on the following: goals, objectives, activities, responsibilities, timeframes (and an indication of associated resources required for its implementation). The Strategy comprises the following typical elements of chemicals management system: legislation, institutional matters, training, awareness raising, and technical infrastructure.

Principles: The National Implementation Strategy is based on the following key principles:

- an integrated life-cycle approach;
- harmonisation across the value chain; and
- using occupational health and safety legislation as the overarching instrument for GHS implementation, in harmony with international trends.

The **Goals** of the National Implementation Strategy are to:

- enhance the protection of human health and the environment;
- reduce the need for testing and evaluation of chemicals; and
- facilitate international trade in chemicals whose hazards have been properly assessed and identified on an international basis

Objectives: The main objectives of the National Implementation Strategy are to:

- devise an approach to provide for the full implementation of the GHS in South Africa by 2008;
- ensure an integrated life-cycle approach which will be harmonised across the chemicals value chain;
- ensure continued alignment with international trends in the further development of the GHS; and
- ensure that compliance with the GHS requirements is prescribed by law.

Imperatives and Benefits: The main benefits of the GHS, and hence imperatives for the National Implementation Strategy, are the following:

- Implementation of the GHS is of paramount importance to South Africa, as an international norm with respect to human health, work place safety, the environment and international trade in chemicals, to ensure that technical barriers to trade do not present an obstacle to increased exports.
- The GHS offers cost-benefits by providing standardised elements of hazard classification and communication that obviate the need for their development by individual countries. GHS compliant countries exporting hazardous chemicals to South Africa will benefit because their hazard communication approaches will be aligned with South African requirements. At the same time South African exports will automatically be aligned with the labelling requirements of their trading partners.
- South Africa stands to derive strategic benefits by working proactively and in harmony with: its trading partners (e.g. the South African Development Community (SADC); the European Union (EU), the North American Free Trade Area (NAFTA), and the MERCOSUR countries (Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay and Uruguay, and associated members Bolivia and Chile)); as well as with relevant multi-national organisations (e.g. the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the WSSD Partnership), in the implementation of the GHS.
- The GHS will enhance access by South African exporters to foreign markets, which is one of the strategic objectives of the country's Integrated Manufacturing Strategy.
- The harmonized system will facilitate the development of harmonised training modules that will be required to meet the extensive training needs.