
Chemical Dialogue

The Chemical Dialogue (CD) continues to discuss ways to contribute to APEC's overarching goals of trade liberalization and business facilitation.

The CD program focuses on the challenges imposed by different approaches to regulation, including the difficulty in balancing the protection of trade secrets and confidential information with the need for transparency, facilitating data exchange and the varying regulatory approaches to the treatment of chemicals.

The CD also continues to put emphasis on the integration of its work with the international chemicals agenda.

Due to the global impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, the CD Plenary Meeting convened for the first time online on 5–6 November 2020. Discussions focused on updating the CD's Strategic Framework; regulatory cooperation activities and the CD's recently developed [Regulatory Cooperation Report](#); as well as updates on ongoing activities and successes from CD virtual working groups and member economies.

Marine Debris

The CD continues its partnership with the Oceans and Fisheries Working Group (OFWG) to promote innovative solutions to marine debris. During CD25, the Virtual Working Group on Marine Debris provided an overview of the 2020 webinar series developed in collaboration with the OFWG, which focused on innovative funding models and innovative technologies for land-based waste management in the APEC region. The CD also noted the Working Group's [website](#) as a good resource to find all marine debris related activity in APEC.

Risk Assessment Workshop

During CD25, the CD's Virtual Working Group on Regulatory Cooperation and Convergence (VWGRCC) announced the implementation of the CD Risk Challenge Virtual Workshop, "Facilitating Trade by Improving Risk Assessment Capacity," which will take place in February 2021. The workshop aims to promote understanding of assessing risk in resource-limited settings using actual examples.

Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals

The Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (or GHS) is an internationally agreed-upon system created by the United Nations. It is designed to replace the various classification and labelling standards used in different economies by using consistent criteria for classification and labelling on a global level.

During CD25 it was noted that the 2020 GHS questionnaire was endorsed and responses from APEC economies indicate more collaboration and alignment is required across the region. 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

Clearinghouse Website for GHS Labelling

Responding to the needs of the chemical industry, the CD created a website in 2010 that collects and provides GHS-standardized labelling elements in local languages: the website is called the [GHS Reference Exchange and Tool, or G.R.E.A.T.](#), and it is managed by Chinese Taipei.

Authorities and stakeholders in the chemical industry can find translations of labelling terms for hazard communication and international trade purposes. Industry stakeholders and interested users will also be able to search for elements on the website and prepare their own labelling in different local languages.

As of November 2020, the GHS labelling elements on the website were provided in 37 languages, including languages from 11 member economies—including Australia, Chile, China, Indonesia, Japan, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, the Philippines, Russia, Thailand and Chinese Taipei—and in 26 languages from EU members. As of October 2020, the website has received over 250,000 visits, predominately for viewing the labelling elements in different languages.

Virtual Working Group on Regulatory Convergence and Cooperation

In May 2012, at the Chemical Dialogue meeting in Kazan, Russia, members agreed to establish a Virtual Working Group (VWG) on Regulatory Convergence and Cooperation. The main aim of the VWG is to examine how the work of the CD could contribute to the broader APEC agenda for regulatory cooperation.

During CD25, the VWG provided an update on activities, including the 2021 goals of delivering the expected outcomes of the APEC CD project on “Facilitating Trade by Improving Risk Assessment Capacity” and developing a:

- A Risk Assessment “Toolbox”
- APEC Guidelines for Risk Assessment in the Chemical Industry
- A Compendium of Risk Assessment/Management Resources

Additionally, during CD25 the [Report on Regulatory Cooperation](#) was tabled and endorsed after final edits from CD members. The best practices highlighted in the Report will become the foundation for a toolkit that will be developed in 2021.

Chemical Dialogue Regulator’s Forum

Due to COVID-19, APEC member economies provided brief regulatory updates during CD25. The CD encouraged economies to consider nominating a Regulator’s Forum Chair to push work forward, including developing an action plan and building up participation in the Forum.

Source: <https://www.apec.org/Groups/Committee-on-Trade-and-Investment/Chemical-Dialogue>.