ECOSOC Economic and Social Council

COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE TRANSPORT OF DANGEROUS GOODS AND ON THE GLOBALLY HARMONIZED SYSTEM OF CLASSIFICATION AND LABELLING OF CHEMICALS

Regulating hazardous chemicals to enhance protection of human health and environment during their transport, handling and use

Work on the development and harmonization of provisions to ensure the safe transport of dangerous goods by all modes of transport started in 1953. In 1999, the Committee was reconfigured and its mandate was extended to cover worldwide harmonization of all regulatory regimes (e.g. transport; workplace safety; consumer protection; environment protection) addressing classification and labelling of hazardous chemicals. The Committee meets once every two years, while its two subcommittees meet back-to-back twice every year. Its recommendations are implemented worldwide.

UN main policymaking body for the development of worldwide harmonized provisions for classification, labelling, safe transport, handling and use of chemicals

The work of the Committee is related to SDGs 3, 6, 8, 12, 13, 14, 17. At its eleventh session (9 December 2022), the Committee:

- Endorsed the recommendations of its two subcommittees
- Adopted amendments to the "Model Regulations on the Transport of Dangerous Goods" and to the "Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS)", to be published in revised consolidated editions of these publications in 2023 for worldwide implementation
- Adopted a draft ECOSOC resolution for consideration by the Council at its 2023 session
- Approved its program of work for 2023-2024
- Some of the main areas of work achieved during 2021-2022 or to be continued in 2023-2024 are outlined below for each sub-committee

Recommendations on the transport of dangerous goods

- Updating of provisions for the safe transport of electric storage systems (e.g: lithium ion and sodium ion batteries and cells for use in electric vehicles, tools and equipment) and cleaner or alternative low-carbon fuels (e.g: compressed natural gas for combustion engines or hydrogen for fuel cell engines)
- Updating of provisions authorizing the use of plastics materials that can be remanufactured, recycled and recovered, for packagings of dangerous goods
- simplifying the provisions for the transport of nitrocellulose membrane filters to facilitate their availability for COVID-19 rapid test devices worldwide

Recommendations on classification and labelling of chemicals

- Ongoing revision of the criteria to allow classification using non-animal test methods for health and environmental hazards
- Ongoing improvement and further development of hazard communication elements in labels of chemical products
- Considering how to better address chemicals of high concern (e.g: endocrine disruptors; (very) persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic substances; (very) persistent, mobile and toxic substances)
- Considering how to better address hydrofluorocarbons and greenhouse gases

Did you know that...

Even if you do not work in the chemical sector, you use or are exposed in your daily life to chemicals and articles covered by the work of the Committee (e.g: fuels used in car engines, bleaching agents, paints, solvents, lithium cells and batteries (laptops, phones, bikes, cars), gases for medical use, heating, as propellants, aerosols...)

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