BACKGROUND

In September 2010, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in order to further their common goals of developing and implementing effective chemical management regimes. This partnership is now embarking on a joint pilot project in Africa which will be launched on 3–4 June 2013 with an initial workshop taking place in Kenya.

Warehousing and cross-border road transport of chemicals are key concerns in Africa in terms of chemicals management. Frequently, the available infrastructure for emergency response is ineffective and emergency prevention and preparedness skills are limited. These were the findings of the first African Regional Workshop on Chemical Safety Management held in Nairobi, Kenya, in October 2011 by UNEP and the ICCA. The workshop has led to the subsequent development of the joint project, “Promoting Chemical Safety Management in the African Region”. The 24-month project will place particular emphasis on safe transport of chemicals, safe practices in warehousing of chemical products and appropriate emergency preparedness practices.

CONTEXT

Chemical production in Africa is still limited. Consequently, the majority of chemicals enter the African continent through major ports which serve as main transfer sites. Thus, project activities focus on capacity building for sound chemicals management and the implementation of good practices in emergency preparedness at major ports in Africa and throughout the sub-regions. Specifically the project will look at the Port of Mombasa in Kenya serving East Africa, and Port of Tema in Ghana serving West Africa.

UNEP–ICCA INTERVENTION IN AFRICA

The UNEP–ICCA project will strive to raise awareness for chemical safety and emergency preparedness by supporting an expert review of the existing emergency preparedness plans at the selected port areas and through workshops and a multi-stakeholder emergency exercise. To better understand the situation of chemicals management in East and West Africa, a mapping of major stakeholders in the context of chemicals management and of major transport and warehousing related hazards complements the joint project activities.
PROJECT LAUNCHING
The launch workshops in both Kenya and Ghana will kick-start project activities by bringing together key stakeholders of chemicals management to enhance their knowledge on the principles of chemical safety in transport and warehousing. These sub-regional workshops will provide a platform to strengthen cross-sectoral cooperation for sound chemical management and to discuss the key concerns.

SITUATION MAPPING
After the initial workshops, UNEP and ICCA will engage local partners to identify key stakeholders for chemicals management in each sub-region. This exercise will take into account current roles and responsibilities of various public and private sector organizations in relation to safe chemicals management. Data on the most relevant chemical hazards and the quantities of chemicals transported and stored in Kenya and Ghana in large volumes will be collected. Together, this information will form the basis for further risk assessment, setting priorities for future actions to improve risk management.

AT THE PORT AREAS
Project activities will be focused around four-day capacity building and awareness-raising exercises at the Ports of Mombasa and Tema. These will specifically target local stakeholders and address best practices for the handling, transport, warehousing, loading and unloading of chemicals at port areas. UNEP and ICCA will provide international expert support to identify on- and off-site risks and to implement appropriate risk management measures. These activities will also include an emergency exercise based on an accident scenario to emphasise the importance of a multi-stakeholder approach for emergency preparedness.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES
Outputs of the project will include:
- strengthening the African network of chemical safety practitioners
- improving the capacity to deal with emergency situations and handling of chemicals
- collecting of pilot cases to serve as examples for future application of these tools in the region

Through a region-wide dissemination workshop the project will leverage best practices, showcase project results and provide recommendations for future activities. A joint UNEP–ICCA Case Study Report will be published for dissemination of the project results, both in Africa and globally. A training package supplement (CD ROM), including all training materials, exercises and guidance used throughout the project, will be developed to facilitate similar joint UNEP–ICCA capacity building efforts in the future.

Both the ICCA and UNEP bring their prior expertise and programme tools to the service of this project.

UNEP
The Awareness and Preparedness for Emergencies at the Local Level (APELL) programme provides a 10 step approach to improve multi-stakeholder coordination among local authorities, communities and industry to be prepared in case of an accident. The Responsible Production Approach builds on APELL, Process Safety Management and Corporate Social Responsibility and provides a framework and toolkit for chemical hazard management in SMEs.

ICCA
Responsible Care is the chemical industry’s voluntary global initiative that drives continuous health, safety and environmental performance as well as open and transparent communication. The Global Product Strategy advocates harmonizing the global level of product safety assessment. Through the Chemicals Portal, it offers the general public and ICCA members direct and free access to product stewardship information.