

ICCA – a landmark year for industry

The association's president looks ahead to ICCM4, the UN's post-development era and the chemical industry's plans for 2015



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As ICCM4 and the UN's post-2015 development era draw near, global chemical manufacturers see 2015 as our year to fully raise the curtain on the role chemistry can play in tackling the world's biggest challenges.

2015 will be a landmark year for two reasons. First, it's been nearly fifteen years since world leaders met in New York City to agree to one of the UN's most ambitious initiatives to date: the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). At the time, UN member states envisioned 2015 to be the tipping point in their efforts to bring real, tangible improvements to people's lives around the world. The global chemistry industry recognised it had an important role to play in helping to make this happen.

Today, thanks to the solutions provided by our industry and others, more people around the world have access to safe drinking water than they did at the turn of the millennium. Over that same period, investments in medicine and other tools to combat malaria, AIDS and tuberculosis have saved millions of lives. And the number of child deaths over the last fifteen years has declined dramatically.

This news is encouraging for the International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA) and the more than 20 million men and women around the world working to create the innovative products and technologies that can help solve such large-scale, global challenges. At the same time, we recognise that the contributions chemistry can make to improve the lives of everyone on the planet are far from complete.

The second reason is two upcoming conferences: the 4th International Conference on Chemicals Management

(ICCM4) in September, and the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties (COP-21) in December. In the lead up to both events, ICCA is focused on prioritising the goals on which we can make tangible progress on the sound management of chemicals worldwide through to 2020.

Our first priority is continuing to drive the development of products and technologies that can enhance our quality of life and enable a more sustainable future. Advances in chemistry play an instrumental role in increasing agricultural production to feed a growing world population. Chemistry makes possible the new technologies and materials developed for sustainable construction and urban mobility, as well as new materials used in insulation, adhesives, sealants and lightweight materials used by both the construction and transport sectors. As governments work together to finalise the sustainable development goals (SDGs), agreed at the 2012 UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio, and design a post-2015 development landscape, we urge them to recognise the ongoing importance of innovation in the development of new chemistries, materials and products.

At the same time, global chemical manufacturers are committed to continuously improving our products and the processes we follow to help enhance health, safety and sustainability. That's why our second priority in 2015 is to stand by our commitment to the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (Saicm). Some of our strongest contributions include encouraging industry partners around the world to join Responsible Care® and implement the Global Product Strategy (GPS). These two industry-designed programmes can help ensure chemicals are produced and used in ways that minimise significant adverse impacts on human health and the environment.

Last year, ICCA was hard at work updating the Responsible Care Global Charter. This year, our member associations are reaching

out to chemical companies around the world to encourage them to commit to perform excellence in the safe management of chemicals throughout their lifecycle as required by the revised Global Charter.

2015 is also our opportunity to advance the Global Product Strategy (GPS). We designed this product stewardship program to make available plain language safety summaries about our products while improving the overall management of chemicals throughout the product lifecycle. At the close of 2014, industry stakeholders could access at least 4,400 GPS Safety Summaries from Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Latin America and North America through our GPS Chemicals Portal. More than 150 top chemical companies and more than 40 associations currently implement GPS.

Finally, in collaboration with Unep and other Saicm stakeholders, the industry is committed to help those countries that currently lack the capacity to manage chemicals safely. For example, ICCA is partnering with Unep to provide key port stakeholders in Ghana and Kenya with basic training on dangerous goods handling and capacity building for emergency preparedness and response. We see these projects as the most effective use of available resources in promoting measurable progress on sound chemicals management around the world.

Given the critical role of the chemical industry for the broader manufacturing sector, regulatory frameworks that work with industry-led initiatives will not only strengthen chemicals management; they will also help promote broader economic development around the world.

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