

Foreword

The effect of chemicals in the environment, on both human and non-human biota, is becoming a matter of increasing public focus and concern, for as production of greater numbers of these chemicals continues, quantities increase and detection becomes more difficult.

The Scientific Group on Methodologies for the Safety Evaluation of Chemicals (SGOMSEC) was established to review methods of assessing the impact of such chemicals on the environment and is actively supported by the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) within the framework of the International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS).

Because of the magnitude of the task of investigating such effects, and with limited resources available to do so, there must be international agreement on the priorities of action and techniques to be used. This can be achieved by bringing together members of the international scientific community for discussion and review of such problems. Since 1978, SCOPE has been actively involved in organizing review meetings, such as those of SGOMSEC, which require interdisciplinary and cooperative efforts.

SGOMSEC 3 deals with methods for monitoring the toxicity and transformation of mixtures of chemicals in the environment, for identifying biological indicators of exposure to chemical mixtures and, most importantly, for determining the effects on the metabolic and biochemical processes in biological systems of plant and animal populations and their overall effect on communities and ecosystems. This report indicates how successful discussion on such important issues has already been, and how agreement on research methods and priorities has already been achieved. These results will be of great use to participants in the IPCS.

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The third monograph prepared by the Scientific Group of Methods for the Safety Evaluation of Chemicals deals with Methods for Assessing the Effects of Mixtures of Chemicals. This topic is of high relevance to the International Programme on Chemical Safety. Thus, SGOMSEC is fulfilling the role, envisaged by WHO and ICSU/SCOPE when establishing SGOMSEC as a group, which was to facilitate an exchange of ideas on the most difficult methodology problems of chemical safety. It is expected that the publication of this monograph will arouse great interest as was the case with the two previous volumes prepared by SGOMSEC.

Sadly, the late Dr Vouk will no longer be mentioned as an editor in the publications prepared by SGOMSEC in future, and I feel I should take this opportunity to recall his valuable work, not only in connection with SGOMSEC but also in WHO, where he was responsible for establishing the cornerstone on which the IPCS has developed. Dr Vouk will be missed but he will not be forgotten.

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