

Conference Call

Safety in Chemical Production

by M. D. Booth

On 20 November 2002 a workshop entitled **Safety and Toxicology** was held at the premises of the SINOPEC Corporation in Beijing, China. The workshop, the fifth in a series organized by the IUPAC Committee on Chemistry and Industry (COCI), was cosponsored by UNESCO and SINOPEC.



Workshop Opening Session.

The workshop was chaired by Qi Zhai, the head of SINOPEC's Safety and Environment Bureau. Present were Yang Youming, deputy director of Work Safety Supervision, State Administration of Work Safety; and Axel Hebel, the UNESCO representative in Beijing. SINOPEC arranged for the workshop to coincide with a meeting of their safety and environment managers, which swelled the audience to over 150 delegates. Several members of the Chemical Industry and Engineering Society of China were in attendance.

Nelson Wright provided a brief introductory talk on IUPAC and COCI, concentrating on activities pertinent to industry. He was followed by Mike Booth who summarized the history of the safety workshops and provided an outline of the plan of implementation arising from the World Summit on Sustainable Development that had taken place in Johannesburg, South Africa, in August. Booth emphasized Section 22, which covers the management of chemicals throughout their life cycle. The full text of the plan of implementation can be found at <www.icca-at-wssd.org/Plan.pdf>.

Axel Hebel, program specialist for Science, Technology, and Environment of UNESCO in Beijing, provided a historical perspective on UNESCO's efforts

to assist developing countries and countries in transition with chemical safety programs. Hebel explained that UNESCO helps build up national and regional research and training capacities in the field of chemical safety through cooperation with competent international and regional networks and centers and national specialized scientific bodies and institutions. He intimated that the gap between developing countries and developed countries in the areas of safety education research and the implementation of safety measures has been widening. Therefore, he said, it has become vitally important to promote the communication and dissemination of state-of-the-art knowledge about safety and environmental protection in chemical production. Hebel also mentioned the Safety Training Programme—jointly developed by IUPAC, UNESCO, and the U.N. Industrial Development Organization—that promotes safety and environmental protection in chemical, pharmaceutical, and biotechnological research and production.

Steven Harper, who spent 11 years as a U.K. Government Chemical Inspector and who authored the *National Chemical Guidance*, summarized how the U.K. chemical industries have implemented the SEVESO II directive. He later discussed the classification and labelling of hazardous substances, with references to both U.K. and UN guidelines, and then outlined "emergency plans and preparedness."

Judy Castledine, director of Environment, Health, & Safety at Dow Chemical Pacific Limited (based in Hong Kong), talked about Dow's worldwide efforts on safety/environment/toxicology control and made particular reference to Dow's Asian plants and to the important role of Responsible Care, which makes every employee from the CEO down "responsible."

Harry C. Y. Heo, technical and safety manager, Asia Pacific Region, Nitriles, BP Chemicals (based in Seoul), outlined what BP does to improve awareness among customers and service providers about the safe handling of toxic materials such as acrylonitrile. He summarized BP's emergency response system and practices and emphasized the company's "Product Stewardship" program.

The workshop was organized by Jinliang Qiao, COCI representative from China and Mike Booth, COCI representative from South Africa.

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