

The Scientific Group on Methodologies for the Safety Evaluation of Chemicals (SGOMSEC) met on 26–31 January 1997, at the Joint Research Center in Ispra, Italy, as the guest of the European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods. SGOMSEC was established in 1979 at the initiative of Professor Norton Nelson from New York University. SGOMSEC is a nongovernmental organization sponsored by the IPCS (International Programme on Chemical Safety, established within the World Health Organization with the cooperation of the United Nations Environment Programme [UNEP] and the International Labour Organisation [ILO]), and the Scientific Committee on Problems of the Environment (SCOPE), itself a body of the International Council of Scientific Unions (ICSU).

The hallmark of SGOMSEC is its focus on methodology. The workshop topics chosen for evaluation by invited experts and SGOMSEC members are those of particular interest to governmental organizations and for which methodological issues are important in guiding decisions pertinent to protecting environmental health. The goal of this 13th SGOMSEC meeting was to assess the status of alternative methodologies for the safety assessment of chemical and physical agents. The goal of replacing, reducing, and refining the use of animals in safety assessment has achieved increasing recognition in recent years, including governmental decrees requiring the use of valid alternative methods if available.

Before any new approach can be supported or adopted for general use in protecting public health and the environment, it is

crucial that the scientific methodologies are fully understood, including their limitations. Accordingly, the primary goal of the SGOMSEC Workshop on Alternative Testing Methodologies was to explore the current status and future directions of methodology pertinent to this area.

On behalf of the members of SGOMSEC we acknowledge with deep gratitude the hard work of many individuals whose contributions to SGOMSEC 13 were highly significant. We are particularly indebted to the two co-chairs, Ermino Marafante of the European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods and William Stokes of the U.S. National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, to the SGOMSEC 13 participants, to Dr. Philippe Bourdeau, of SCOPE under whose leadership of SGOMSEC this meeting was initially planned, and, in particular, to the leadership and staff of the European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods for their superb hospitality and highly professional support. Among those who deserve special thanks are Cecile Stapleton, Betty Davis, and Jean Wang of the Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute. We thank the U.S. National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, the Commission of the European Communities, International Program on Chemical Safety, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, and the European Centre for the Validation of Alternative Methods for financial support of this meeting.

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