

WELCOME ADDRESS BY SMF PRESIDENT, MR DOUGLAS FOO,
AT “TOXICOLOGICAL RISK ASSESSMENT & PRODUCT SAFETY FORUM 2017”, AT
THE IMPERIAL BALLROOM OF MARINA MANDARIN HOTEL,
ON 15 FEBRUARY 2017 (WEDNESDAY), AT 8:30 AM

Distinguished guests,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Good morning.

Introduction

1. I’m pleased to join you today at the “Toxicological Risk Assessment & Product Safety Forum 2017”, organised by Chemical Watch and supported by the Singapore Manufacturing Federation. We, in SMF, are delighted that this meaningful forum is finally here today.
2. This event is the first of such forum in the region that cuts across different industry segments, advocating the importance of safe products to consumers and the environment. This forum has brought together product safety experts from across various industries and from different parts of the world. I believe this 1-day conference will yield interesting perspectives for all of us.
3. Today’s forum is important and timely especially when emerging or new

technologies are creating innovative products that can be used across various industry segments. In essence, the impact of any safety issues arising from a product could be wide-ranging. While the tightening of regulations might be seen by some as constraints, the truth is that it provides opportunities for the industry to move towards sustainable growth with high quality and safe products. And that's what I hope participants will take away from this forum – the opportunities for future growth.

The Korean example of risk assessment

4. Back in the 90s, popular products were introduced using biocides to disinfect humidifiers in Korea. At that time, there was neither specific regulation nor standard governing those consumer or household products. It was only much later in 2011 that researchers found a link between lung damage in pregnant women and the use of such products. It was estimated that about 500 people including pregnant women and babies might have died or been injured after inhaling biocides used in those humidifier disinfectants.
5. These findings in Korea resulted in extremely negative publicity and, in some cases, public shaming of the companies that were involved. Consequently, the authorities were under pressure to act. This episode resulted in the implementation of the Korean law on the Registration and Evaluation of Chemicals, known as K-REACH. Furthermore, due to on-going public sentiments, the Korean authorities have announced amendments to make K-REACH stricter and introduced a separate Safety Management of

Household Products and Biocides Act¹. The Korean episode is an example of how accidents and unsafe use of products can lead to tighter regulations to safeguard consumer safety.

Importance of Chemical Risk Assessment

6. In Singapore, we do not want to wait for such accidents to happen nor for the authorities to be forced to act on the industry. Instead, the industry should take the initiative to partner with the authorities to proactively ensure safe products. For this reason, SMF formed the Clean & Material Protection Committee (or CAMP in short) two years ago. One of the aims of this committee is to collaborate with various regulatory bodies, agencies, manufacturers and suppliers to raise the awareness of safety standards for chemical usage within the relevant industry segments.

7. Since its inception, CAMP has organised and supported various seminars and workshops to raise the technical capacity and encourage collaboration among the industry stakeholders. And this forum is another good example and a positive step towards this objective. In addition, the committee has now partnered with the SMF-Standards Development Organisation (SDO) to explore a potential new work item on specification for non-metallic scouring pad as a safer alternative material to metallic scouring pad commonly used in the F&B industry. The proposed standard would complement HACCP food zone classification and supplement SS 583:2013 on physical and chemical contamination that would benefit the industry.

¹ Korea Proposes a New Way to Regulate Biocides - <https://www.chemadvisor.com/news/694-moe>

Conclusion

8. In Singapore, the manufacturing sector is an important pillar of our economy, contributing about 20 per cent of our GDP. Over the years, we have established global leadership positions in several key industries, such as electronics, biomedical sciences, energy & chemicals, and transport engineering. However, there is no room for complacency. Manufacturing is a globalised and highly competitive sector and we must not only continue to adapt to the disruptive technological trends that are fundamentally transforming it, but at the same time maintaining our Singapore brand - of high quality and safety standards.

9. On this note, I would like to thank Chemical Watch for inviting SMF to be part of this meaningful event. I wish everyone a fruitful time. Thank you!