1.2 Explain the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS).

In the past, there were some differences in the way countries classified and labelled their hazardous products. For example, a product labelled *toxic* in Canada, might be *severely toxic* in New Zealand and *non-toxic* in India. This caused confusion about the classification of the hazardous product and its handling and transport, resulting in difficulties for the safe economic trade of these products.

The Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) is a worldwide system created and controlled by the United Nations that defines and classifies the hazards of hazardous products. An international committee meets on an ongoing basis to update and resolve any specific issues.

The goal of the GHS is to harmonize and unify hazard communication by using one set of rules for classification, labelling and safety data sheets throughout the world.

The two main components of the GHS are:

- Standardized classification of hazardous products
    - Hazard classes and categories
- Standardized communication of hazard and precautionary information
    - Labels
    - Safety data sheets

The GHS is a non-binding system of hazard communication. Only the elements of the GHS adopted into a country's legislation are enforceable by that country.

Some of the benefits of the GHS are to:[1]

- Enhance the protection of human health and the environment by providing an internationally comprehensible system for hazard communication;
- Provide a recognized framework for those countries without an existing system;
- Reduce the need for testing and evaluation of chemicals; and
- Facilitate international trade in chemicals whose hazards have been properly assessed and identified on an international basis.

As a supplemental resources you can review the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS), 7th edition