

Discussion paper

The world we want 2015 Post 2015 Development Agenda Thematic Consultation contribution: **Environmental Sustainability** – **Chemicals**

Submitted to <http://www.worldwewant2015.org/sustainability>

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Version 28 November 2012

For healthy, sustainable and green livelihoods

We, the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN) and Women International for a Common Future (WECF / WICF), both networks representing 700 civil society organizations from around the world, are working for a toxics-free future in which exposure to toxic and hazardous chemicals is no longer a source of harm and where people have the right to enjoy healthy and sustainable green livelihoods that do not harm their health nor the environment. Green livelihoods encompass the right to safe and secure communities and workplaces that are free from toxic threats to people, surrounding environments and to future generations. This is the sustainable future we want for the world and our children.

Estimated 900.000 death from hazardous pesticides and chemicals – particularly in the global South

Each year an estimated 900.000 people die from exposure to hazardous pesticides and chemicals, and 2 million people become ill, and might suffer irreversible harm, premature death, and give birth to children damaged in their development¹. In sub-Saharan almost all these chemicals are imported, but health care cost related to these death and diseases surpasses the official Overseas Development Aid received for the health sector. Many of the hazardous chemicals once they end up in the waste stream, air and water, are very costly and often impossible to clean up.

Recognizing children's right to a healthy environment and vulnerability to harmful chemicals

We further stress the need of intergenerational equity and the protection of all children's right to a safe environment, and also recognising their unique vulnerability to hazardous chemicals.

Irreversible harm to women and men

We recognize that diseases such as cancer, heart disease, reproductive and developmental disorders, asthma, autism, diabetes, degenerative diseases and mental health illnesses have been shown to have links to the pollution of air, water, soil and food,¹ as well as toxic consumer products and wastes.

We stress that peoples' right to green livelihood and a sustainable future are being affected by exposure to toxic chemicals in the workplace, schools, agricultural areas and in the home, and that this may cause serious and irreversible damage such as cancer, birth defects, impaired development, negative impacts in the immune system, neurotoxicity and metabolic impairment. Recent research show that women working

¹ As presented at the ICCM3 at UNEP in Nairobi, September 2012

in the plastics industry have almost twice the risk of developing breast-cancer, similarly for women working as pesticide sprayers.

We stress with concern that persistent and bio-accumulative chemicals remain in the human body long after exposure and can be passed from mother to baby, in utero and via breast milk, and further cross the blood brain barrier to affect a child's central nervous system and its development.

Emerging concerns of endocrine disrupting chemicals, low dose and mixtures

We recognize that fundamental changes are needed in the unsustainable patterns of consumption, production, resource extraction and disposal that dominate the world economic system. We further, recognize that *'fundamental changes are needed in the way that societies manage chemicals,'*ⁱⁱ including their design, use and 'end of life.' We note that the large majority of the pesticides and industrial chemicals currently in production and use have still not been adequately tested for their impact on human health and the environment, particularly in the area of emerging concerns that challenge the central dogma of toxicology such as endocrine disruption, epigenetics², ongoing low dose exposures, and the impacts of chemicals mixtures.

Urgent steps needed to fully implement WSSD Global 2020 Goal on Chemicals

We uphold the 2009 SAICM NGO Global Statement and the World Summit on Sustainable Development's 2020 goal and affirm that *'living in a pollution-free world is a basic human right'* and that the *'fundamental right to life is threatened by exposures to toxic chemicals, hazardous wastes, and contaminated drinking water and food.'*ⁱⁱⁱ

People living in poverty often carry greatest burden from chemical pollution

We acknowledge that the sound management of chemicals including much needed chemical reform is *'essential to achieving sustainable development, including the eradication of poverty and disease, the improvement of human health and the environment and the elevation and maintenance of the standard of living in countries at all levels of development,'*^{iv} consistent with the Millennium Development Goals.

Right to free, prior and informed consent

We stress that meaningful and active participation including the right to free, prior and informed consent by all sectors of civil society, particularly women, workers and indigenous peoples, is essential in regulatory decision-making related to chemical safety, and recognise the urgent need for *'information and knowledge on chemicals throughout their life cycle, including the risks that they pose to human health and the environment,'*^v

Apply the Polluter Pays Principle – create a global chemical clean up and damage fund

We acknowledge that the chemical industry plays a significant role in the global economy with annual sales of over 3,000,000,000,000 U.S. dollars. We note with concern that a steadily increasing share of the world's chemical production is shifting

² Epigenetics is the study of heritable alterations in gene expression caused by mechanisms other than changes in DNA sequence. An epigenetic trait is a stably inherited phenotype resulting from changes in a chromosome without alterations in the DNA sequence.
www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2009/04/090401181447.htm

to developing and transition countries with limited capacity to manage and regulate these operations and without the compliance mechanisms to mitigate risks to human health and the environment.

We note that almost all countries are increasing their use of synthetic pesticides and industrial chemicals, including hazardous substances and nanomaterials contained in consumer products. Yet, the majority of countries especially developing and or those with economies in transition do not have adequate infrastructure or resources to ensure the sound management of pesticides, industrial chemicals and their subsequent wastes. This is particularly so for the escalating quantities of electronic wastes; the ever increasing solid and liquid wastes from mining and petroleum and gas extraction; obsolete pesticides and their containers; and the vast hazardous industrial waste stockpiles - the toxic legacy of our past.

And we recognise the cost of inaction on chemicals is not fully quantified but substantial. We take note of the World Health Organization's conservative estimate that industrial and agricultural chemicals and acute chemical poisonings are responsible for 1.2 million deaths per year and at least 1.7 percent of the global burden of disease.^{vi} The significant costs that these deaths and disease place on individuals, communities and nations (particularly their poor and most vulnerable) are not borne by the chemical producers or shared down the production supply chains. Instead, they impose an unacceptable burden on developing and transition countries.

Questions

What can be done to:

- Support the demands and rights of workers, women and children, indigenous peoples, peasant farmers, consumers and communities affected by toxic chemicals in their exercise of their rights for a healthy environment, worker protection, right to know, fair compensation, medical treatment and environmental justice.
- Halt the toxic body-burden, - stop toxic chemicals building up in our bodies, and those of our children, which threaten the health and sustainability of the next generation and beyond.
- Protect women's health from harmful chemicals, and support specific actions to prevent breast-cancer and other chemicals-related diseases effecting women, by applying the precautionary approach in chemicals and waste legislation, in particular immediate ban of harmful pesticides and hormone disrupting chemicals
- Implement principles that underpin our toxics-free future: precaution, right to know, no data - no market, substitution and elimination of hazardous substances, polluter pays and extended producer responsibility.
- Achieve a sustainable future, a profound transformation of the chemical industry is fundamental and where the protection of workers, indigenous peoples, community health and the environment are not sacrificed to profit.
- Achieve a sustainable and responsible chemical industry, whose core business no longer depends on production of harmful, persistent, bio-accumulative, CMR and

hormone disrupting chemicals. A green chemicals industry must have the goal of eliminating all pollution and pay the true cost of its products throughout their life cycles. Cost internalization mechanisms and fiscal reforms, which truly reflect ecological values can assist in this and help provide the resources needed for the development of sound chemicals management policy, assessment, monitoring and practices.

- Support clear criteria and policies that encourage investments in a green and sustainable chemical sector to help phase out the production of unsustainable chemicals; to support green design and green chemistry; to fully assess using a life cycle approach all new technologies prior to their entering the market, and to protect developing and transition countries from unfair health, environmental and economic burdens.
- Achieve a sustainable future in which everyone can have access to safe, nutritious food, a profound transformation of agriculture to biodiversity-based ecological agriculture is fundamental, without use of harmful and cancer-risk pesticides and GMOs (Genetically Modified Organisms).
- Eliminate the threats posed to consumers globally from unregulated toxic product ingredients. We support and promote the implementation of precautionary, cradle to cradle, life cycle approaches to product design as well as green procurement policies, with third party certification, so that toxic chemicals do not find their way into consumer products and the ensuing wastes; and we call for mandatory labeling of hazardous substances in products and in the workplace, ensuring the protection of all people and the environment.
- Support full chemical and material ingredient transparency and information access throughout supply chains and with the public.
- Achieve a global phase-out of hazardous, unmanageable chemicals including highly hazardous pesticides, persistent bioaccumulative toxins (PBTs), very persistent and very bioaccumulative substances (vPvBs), genotoxins, carcinogens, chemicals affecting reproduction, the immune and nervous systems, endocrine disruptors, substances that undergo long-range transport, toxic metals such as mercury, cadmium and lead and hazardous nanomaterials. A global phase out is essential in order to avoid banned and restricted chemicals from one country being sold or dumped in another, particularly in those countries that do not have the capacity to enforce sound management of chemicals.

Commit ourselves and call upon all stakeholders including governments, non governmental organizations, businesses, private sector institutions, academia, intergovernmental organizations, media and others to work together to urgently reform and harmonize chemicals assessment, regulation and management internationally, regionally and domestically so as to achieve a toxic free future for all. We call for a recommitment to SAICM at the highest political level and urge governments and stakeholders to fundamentally increase financial support to the implementation of SAICM and the multilateral chemical and waste agreements.

ⁱ WHO Media Release 'Almost a quarter of all disease caused by environmental exposure' 16 JUNE 2006 | GENEVA Available at <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/news/releases/2006/pr32/en/index.html>

ⁱⁱ Para 7 Dubai Declaration on International Chemicals Management, Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management Dubai, 2006 <http://www.saicm.org>

ⁱⁱⁱ Press Release, 27 Apr 2001 'Living In A Pollution-free World A Basic Human Right' Available at <http://www.grida.no/news/press/2150.aspx>

^{iv} Para 1 Dubai Declaration

^v Para 21 Dubai Declaration

^{vi} A. Pruess-Ustun, C. Vickers, P. Haefliger, and R. Bertollini, "Knowns and Unknowns on the Burden of Disease due to Chemicals: A Systematic Review", *Environmental Health*, 10: 9, 2011,