



a toxics-free future



24 April 2017

IPEN Intervention on gender

Given by Shweta Narayan

Thank you Mr. President,

We speak on behalf of IPEN, PAN and all the related organizations, and on behalf of the women affected by chemicals, who could not be here.

The former United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon once said, “Wherever we look - and especially if we look through the lens of poverty - we see that women still bear the greatest burdens.”

We as civil society groups would like to rephrase this quote and say, “Wherever we look - and especially if we look through the lens of chemicals - we see that women still bear the greatest burdens.

It is common knowledge that women and men are impacted differently by chemicals and through different routes. Exposure to toxic chemicals damages not just women’s physical, mental and reproductive health but also determines their status in their society. Often women suffering from, for example reproductive damages due to chemical exposure are subject to domestic violence, mental abuse and social exclusion.

While the technical aspect in the management of chemicals is one important criteria, none of these technical aspects seek to include the social implications of chemical exposure to women.

We recognise that a gender action plan has been developed under the Synergy process, however, we feel that it is woefully inadequate and fails to take into account the critical impacts of chemicals on women's bodies and lives.

While, the Stockholm Convention addresses women specifically the implementation is once again lacking. Women are still underrepresented in decision-making about chemical safety, waste, and environment. This creates an imbalance of power and injustice that must be corrected. Women have also been under-represented or not represented at all in studies concerning chemical exposures and health outcomes. Gender disaggregated data is needed to understand different vulnerabilities based on biology, occupations, and gendered practices.

Thus, gender mainstreaming into each step of sound chemicals and waste management decisions at the national and international levels is crucial for achieving effective and inclusive processes. Gender considerations should be part of project planning, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, which will help avoid inequality between women and men and better address ways to minimize chemical exposures for all.

In the next two weeks, each delegate will be faced with a decision – be it establishing standards for low POPs content, listing of new chemicals or granting exemptions to toxic chemicals. We urge the delegates to use their conscience and make decisions based

on good science, precaution and a vision of a toxic free future for all.