

Health Care Without Harm & Health and Environment Alliance Joint Intervention

Health Sector Strategy discussion, SAICM OEWG2, December 15, 2014

Thank you, Mr. President and thank you to the SAICM Secretariat and to the government of Switzerland. This is a joint intervention by HCWH and HEAL.

My name is Laurel Berzanskis and I represent HCWH.

My name is Genon Jensen and I represent HEAL.

HCWH and HEAL are two non governmental organisations that have each been working to strengthen the engagement of the health sector in the implementation of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management.

First, we would like to say that we support the intervention by the Endocrine Society and support their increased involvement in the implementation of the health sector strategy.

We have been working to **create healthy healthcare settings and healthy indoor and outdoor environments to reduce the exposures to harmful chemicals to decrease the harm to human health and the environment**, by tirelessly advocating for the phase-out and substitution of carcinogenic, mutagenic, reprotoxic and endocrine disrupting chemicals.

We would like to quickly give you two concrete examples. First, HCWH's Global Green and Healthy Hospitals initiative is a global specific interest network which asks hospitals to commit to actions that reduce exposure to harmful chemicals in health care settings, such as establishing a chemicals policy framework, preventing and managing chemical emergencies, and asking hospitals to phase-out of Substances of Very High Concern.

And a second example is HEAL's Chemicals Health Monitor project which shares evidence with the public health community and policy makers on the links between chemicals and diseases such as hormone-related cancers, reproductive problems, diabetes, and neurological problems such as learning disabilities, impaired IQ and autism.

We offer some other concrete actions to improve chemicals management in the health sector, namely:

- Need to increase the capacity of health sector and relevant agencies on chemicals and waste.
- The creation of a multi-language webportal especially for the health sector to provide easier access and sharing on existing tools for substitution of harmful chemicals in the health setting, including materials which could be used to raise

awareness of the public, with special emphasis on protecting vulnerable populations, especially unborns, neonates, children and women of childbearing age. For example, the Danish government has a brochure in several languages (Danish, Arabic and others) on 'Good Chemistry for Pregnant Women and Nursing Mothers'. This is an excellent resource for educating members of the public. Also, examples from WHO SAICM survey and examples mentioned earlier could also feature on this webportal available to all.

- Capacity building in the health ministry at the national and local level in collaboration with health sector stakeholders, including pediatricians, obstetricians, midwives and other health professionals who advise parents when preparing for pregnancy
- Consider appointing a health SAICM focal point in each country.
- Increased involvement by the health sector in the:
 - o Elimination of lead paint
 - o Human biomonitoring of highly hazardous pesticides and EDCs to understand exposure, but especially to better orient the needed control measures, ensure compliance is occurring, and to assess effectiveness of chemicals management policies.
- Develop and implement an electronic medical tracking tool for work on occupational health issues in the manufacture of nanomaterials, electronics, and e-waste recycling

Both HEAL and HCWH would be delighted to provide a written submission of our activities to WHO and the Secretariat and look forward to working to increase further health sector engagement. Thank you.