



a toxics-free future

7 February, 2017

IPEN Public Interest NGO Sector Statement

Given by Joe DiGangi

Thank you, Madam Co-Chair-

I would like to begin by thanking the co-chairs for their leadership over the next few years; the secretariat for their meeting preparations; and our gracious Brazilian government hosts for welcoming us here.

A colleague who trained me in this work always encouraged me to figure out the desired results of a meeting before starting it. So, I am going to begin this intervention at the end and bluntly describe four outcomes that we think should emerge from this meeting as results.

Governance – this topic is not on agenda but possibly the most important topic of this process. It would be very useful to request the secretariat to produce a paper on options for governance Beyond 2020, including both voluntary and legally-binding approaches. The Nordic Council paper on this topic may be a useful resource

Agenda 2030

One of few mandated aspects of this process is to develop “measurable objectives in support of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.” But there is no meeting document about this issue and no current opportunity to begin to develop recommendations for these measurable objectives. It would be very useful for the secretariat to develop a chemical safety/SDG linkages paper. This paper should describe how chemical safety is necessary to achieving SDGS 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15, 16, and 17. The IPEN-PAN paper on this topic may be a useful resource.¹ An intersessional working group should be formed to develop options for these objectives for consideration at the 2nd intersessional meeting.²

Financing

We are pleased to see that the modified agenda contains this topic. It is no secret that SAICM is extremely underfunded. The meeting should request the secretariat to produce a paper on new sources of financing resulting from Agenda 2030 along with internalization of costs and cost-recovery instruments. The UNEP Global Chemicals Outlook³, Cost of Inaction⁴, and IPEN⁵ papers on this topic may be useful resources.

Women and chemicals

¹ <http://www.saicm.org/Portals/12/documents/meetings/IP1/Beyond-2020-Chemical-safety-and-Agenda-2030-24-Jan-2017.pdf>

² http://www.saicm.org/Portals/12/documents/meetings/IP1/K1606013_e.pdf

³ <http://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/8455/-Global%20chemicals%20outlook%20towards%20sound%20management%20of%20chemicals-2013Global%20Chemicals%20Outlook.pdf?sequence=3&isAllowed=y>

⁴ http://web.unep.org/chemicalsandwaste/sites/unep.org.chemicalsandwaste/files/publications/Costs_of_Inaction.pdf

⁵ <http://www.saicm.org/Portals/12/documents/meetings/IP1/Beyond-2020-Financing-chemical-safety-24-Jan-2017.pdf>

Women represent half the population and chemical exposures are widespread – but the relationship between women and chemical safety has been largely ignored in chemical safety policymaking and in SAICM. Now is the time to address it. A working group should be formed to develop recommendations for addressing Agenda 2030 and SAICM issues of concern, for consideration at the 2nd intersessional meeting. Female ministers should develop a report on this topic and make recommendations on this issue for adoption by 2020.

There is another way to describe why we think these are useful outcomes.

I have a friend who lives in South Korea named Ms. Han. Over the last two years, her story has unfolded while sitting on the floor in quiet restaurants.

A large electronics company recruited Ms. Han out of high school to work in a factory. She decided to work to get money so that her brother could go to university. She and others did not receive any training or information about the chemicals they worked with – but they could not escape breathing strong odors after heating circuit boards; The air was recirculated and no one had protective equipment.

After 3 months, her menstrual period became irregular. After 8 months, it stopped completely. Most of her co-workers were female so she asked them about this. They said half of the female workers here have the same problem – don't worry.

A year later, Ms Han ended up with a brain tumor. Now she cannot walk alone, eat alone, go to the bathroom alone, and cannot even wash her hands alone.

The recommendations this body makes will ultimately be judged by whether they reduce harm in the real world. We are not here just to use nice words to make interesting declarations. All of us have a responsibility to the residents of our countries. We look forward to ambitious outcome that leads to a toxics-free future.