



for a toxics-free future

## For Immediate Release

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# United Nations Environment Assembly Enters new Era to End Plastic Pollution, and approves a new international scientific panel on chemicals

(Nairobi, Kenya): After 10 days of intense negotiations, governments adopted three resolutions relevant to chemicals and plastics under the resumed fifth United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 5.2). These decisions include:

- A resolution to start talks later this year to agree on a legally binding instrument to tackle plastic pollution focusing on prevention and promoting sustainable production and consumption of plastics. The resolution covers all types of potential pollution and the whole lifecycle of plastics;
- A resolution agreeing to start discussions to create a scientific panel on chemicals, waste, and pollution prevention;
- A resolution that renews the Special Program that provides financial support to developing countries to develop programs contributing to the sound management of chemicals and waste. Additionally, the resolution calls for a new report on the state of the science on endocrine-disrupting chemicals.

**Plastics:** Governments approved a broad mandate to start talks on a plastics treaty. IPEN believes that the treaty should help prevent health threats from the widely used hazardous chemicals embedded in plastics, such as endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs). These chemicals include phthalates, bisphenols, brominated flame retardants, and PFAS, also known as “forever chemicals”. All of these are chemicals known to cause severe harm to health. When recycled, these chemicals can potentially expose vulnerable populations to health threats.

IPEN says the treaty needs to have legally binding provisions to help reduce the use of plastics products. Based on current forecasts of huge growth in plastic and chemical production and use, slowing down this growth is crucial to defend the health of the planet and of people.

Vito Buonsante, IPEN Policy & Technical Advisor, stated: “We are pleased the Plastics Treaty resolution scope all impacts throughout their lifecycle. The important work now starts, ensuring that the health impacts of plastics, including microplastics and hazardous chemicals, will be covered by the future Treaty.”

Semia Gharbi, IPEN Regional coordinator for North Africa and the Middle East stated: “Plastics are poisoning the circular economy, and the UNEA decision should now start an honest discussion about the toxic chemicals used to make plastics.”

**Science-Policy Panel:** Gilbert Kuepou from the Research and Education Center for Development (CREPD) in Cameroon stated: “While IPEN welcomes the focus on chemicals, waste, and pollution prevention, it notes that the lack of decisive action on chemicals and waste in the past has not been because of a lack of robust evidence, but due to the unwillingness to take precautionary action, even when the science is solid.” Examples include lead in paint and bisphenol A.



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**Chemicals and Wastes:** Governments also recognized that countries should increase action to achieve the sound management of chemicals and waste. In particular, they approved updating the State of the Science of Endocrine-Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs) report, published in 2012, urging countries to take further action to reduce or eliminate the risks associated with EDCs and other issues of concern.

“EDCs are everywhere, from plastics to pesticides, and this class of hazardous chemicals are linked to cancer, reproductive harm and more. Updating the EDC report should help to move this science to policy action. We are particularly concerned with potential industry interference, who continue to deny the science, noting the recent EU court case on the plastic chemical BPA, where the industry tried to deny the science linking BPA to triggering human hormones and threatening public health. Africa needs global action on EDCs and labeling of EDCs in plastics and pesticides to protect our borders from these chemicals coming in,” said IPEN Co-Chair Dr. Tadesse Amera.

IPEN has published a series of studies in the run up to UNEA 5.2, based on work carried out by its international partners based around the world. These reports underscored the serious impacts of plastics on human health and the environment globally, throughout the lifecycle and value chain of plastics. Time and again, these impacts hit developing and emerging economies disproportionately.

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**IPEN (International Pollutants Elimination Network)**, the global environmental health network of over 600 organizations in over 125 countries, works to eliminate and reduce the most hazardous substances to forge a toxics-free future.