



a toxics-free future

IPEN Report on Rio+20 Chemical and Waste commitments

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While overall the text of the *Future We Want* is weak and does not reflect the urgency of the global crisis affecting us all, for the chemical and waste section, many of the issues raised by IPEN were at least addressed. The meeting, although hailed as one with the *full participation of civil society*, did not in reality reflect this. Many working groups were quickly closed to NGOs as small meeting rooms became overcrowded, and only delegates were allowed to speak in the working groups.

As transport to side events in venues outside Rio Centro was sporadic and difficult to find, leaving people stranded for many hours, delegates simply refused to leave Rio Centro. And while the civil society events were numerous and exciting, the fact that they were held on the opposite side of the city, 3 hours away by bus or car, meant many delegates did not hear the important messages being delivered by the thousands of civil society groups in Rio de Janeiro.

As the final text of the *Future We Want* was adopted in plenary on Tuesday 19th, 'boos' could be heard from the overcrowded plenary room, and NGOs or the UN Major groups were not allowed final statements.

What was achieved for chemicals and waste management

In summary, the Chemicals and Waste text adopted reaffirms commitment to SAICM and the 2020 goal of the World Summit on Sustainable Development 2002. It encourages the development of environmentally sound and safer alternatives to hazardous chemicals in products and processes, and gives special mention to life-cycle assessment, public information and extended producer responsibility. It urges countries to take all possible measures to prevent illegal dumping of hazardous waste and welcomes the Basel Ban decision. The text also commits governments to recycling, requiring environmentally sound management of waste, with particular mention of the challenges of electronic waste and plastics. It also acknowledges the need for long term and sustained funding for chemical management.

What was achieved in detail.

IPEN called for reaffirmation of SAICM. At paragraph 214, the text provides a reaffirmation of the need for SAICM *“as part of a robust, coherent, effective and efficient system for the sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle including to respond to emerging challenges”*.

In Para 213, Governments reaffirm their aim to achieve the 2020 goal of *“sound management of chemicals throughout their life cycle and of hazardous waste in ways that lead to minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment, as set out in the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation.”*

IPEN called for cessation of illegal waste dumping. At Para 219, the text calls for all stakeholders to take all possible measures to prevent the unsound management of hazardous wastes and their illegal dumping. Governments also welcomed the Basel Ban decision at Basel Convention COP10.

IPEN called for the phase-out of hazardous chemicals in products. At Para 220, governments encouraged the development of environmentally sound and safer alternatives to hazardous chemicals in products and processes. They also encouraged life-cycle assessment, public information and extended producer responsibility.

The text also welcomed the mercury negotiations (at Para 221) and supported a gradual phase-down in the consumption and production of hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs).

Importantly, at Para 223 governments *“acknowledged that sustained and adequate long-term funding is a key element for the sound management of chemicals and waste”* and welcomed the Consultative Process on Financing Options for Chemicals and Waste.

IPEN called for cost internalization and full application of the ‘polluter pays’ principle. Although governments called at Para 217 for continued and new public-partnerships, there was no reference to cost internalization or ‘polluter pays’.

Nor was there any reference to the adverse impacts of climate change on chemicals.

Inclusion of Energy Recovery from Waste

At Para 218, while committing to the 3R’s (reduce, reuse and recycle), unfortunately governments also committed to *“increase energy recovery from waste with a view to managing the majority of global waste in an environmentally sound manner and where possible, as a resource”*. While this may be viewed as support for waste to energy incinerators, it can be more usefully interpreted as support for sustainable solutions such as anaerobic digestors using organic waste. Nevertheless NGOs need to closely follow this issue to ensure that countries interpret it in the right way.

Oceans

IPEN called for urgent action on marine plastic debris

While at Para 218, electronic waste and plastics were acknowledged as posing particular problems that need to be addressed, marine plastic debris was addressed

at Para 163 under Oceans, which committed *“to take action by 2025, based on collected scientific data, to achieve significant reductions in marine debris to prevent harm to the coastal and marine environment.”* Worryingly, this appears to delay action of plastic ocean gyres for a number of years. Marine pollution in the form of plastic, persistent organic pollutants, heavy metals, and nitrogen-based compounds was highlighted from a number of marine and land-based sources, including shipping and land runoff, but reference to transboundary air pollutants was omitted.

Health and Population

IPEN called for the recognition of the link between pollution and chronic diseases such as cancer, heart disease and developmental and reproductive problems. At Para 141 under the Health and Population section, governments recognized that *“reducing inter-alia air, water and chemical pollution leads to positive effects on health.”*

Food Security, Nutrition and Sustainable Agriculture

IPEN called for biodiversity-based ecologically sound agriculture, whereas at Para 110 under Agriculture, governments resolved *“to increase sustainable agricultural production”* and in Para 111, referred to the necessity *“to promote, enhance and support more sustainable agriculture”*.

Mining

IPEN called for action on wastes from mining and gas extraction industries. Unfortunately, there is no acknowledgment of pollution by mining or mining wastes or pollution from extractive industries. While the two paragraphs dealing with mining are very pro mining, at Para 228, it is acknowledged that there is a *“need for effective safeguards that reduce social and environmental impacts as well conserving biodiversity and ecosystems, including during post-mining closure.”*

Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development

The following issues should be tracked by IPEN to ensure chemical and waste management is adequately addressed.

High Level Political Forum

At Para 84, governments decided to establish a high-level, universal intergovernmental forum that would follow up on the implementation of sustainable development and replace the UN Commission on Sustainable Development.

Environmental Pillar in the Context of Sustainable Development

At Para 88, governments invited the UN General Assembly to adopt a resolution to strengthen and upgrade UNEP, with universal membership of the Governing Council of UNEP.

Sustainable Development Goals

It was agreed to establish an inclusive and transparent intergovernmental process on sustainable developments, open to all stakeholders, starting no later than the 67th meeting of the UN General Assembly.

Means of Implementation

At Para 258, governments urged those developed countries that have not yet done so to make additional concrete efforts towards the target of 0.7 per cent of Gross National Product (GNP) for Overseas Development Aid (ODA) to developing countries, including the specific target of 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of GNP for ODA to least developed countries, in accordance with their commitments. At Para 273 regarding the dissemination of clean and environmentally-sound technologies, governments requested the UN Secretary General, on the basis of the options identified and taking into account existing models, to make recommendations regarding the facilitation mechanism to the 67th Session of the UN General Assembly.

IPEN Global Common Statement on a Toxic Free Future

<http://ipen.org/toxics-free-2012/common-statement/>