

Thank you, Madam President,

Health Care Without Harm is an international coalition of more than 500 organizations in 52 countries and offices on four continents. We have been working for more than 15 years with health sector to transform this sector so that it becomes ecologically sustainable and a leading advocate for environmental health and justice across the globe.

HCWH works with health professionals, hospitals, health systems, ministries of health, NGOs and international organizations on a variety of issues to substitute mercury based medical devices, primarily thermometers and blood pressure devices with safe, affordable and accurate alternatives.

In collaboration with the World Health Organization we continue to build the global Mercury--Free Health Care Initiative, which is working with hospitals and health systems in dozens of countries to model substitution of mercury thermometers and blood pressure devices in the health sector. Indeed we have seen significant progress, with affordable, accurate alternatives being demonstrated in a growing number of countries, including China, India, Nepal, Philippines, Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, South Africa and Tanzania.

HCWH supports the Proposed Strategy for Strengthening the Engagement of the Health Sector in the Implementation of the Strategic Approach, and believes the areas identified, properly resourced and implemented, would go a long way toward achieving SAICM's goals. The focus on risk evaluation and risk management to the exclusion of hazard evaluation and hazard reduction is a weakness of the document. HCWH urges a consideration of inclusion of a goal to consider and evaluate the hazard characteristics of chemicals and to affirm goals to reduce chemicals based on inherent hazards in addition to risk. Increasingly, forward-thinking companies, agencies and governments are adopting this approach because of the difficulty in achieving perfect control of the most hazardous substances. Particularly for chemicals that persist and bio accumulate, misuse threatens public health and burdens governments with the legacy of their use for generations to come.

The Aims and Objectives section of the Proposed Strategy could be strengthened by explicitly articulating an objective around the engagement of the sector in work to reduce the toxicity -- throughout the life cycle -- of products and chemicals used in health care. This would be consistent with other portions of the document.

The involvement of all relevant sectors and stakeholders is central to achieving the objectives of the Overarching Policy Strategy of the Strategic Approach. HCWH looks forward to working with other delegates during the ICCM3 and beyond to develop a collaborative project that truly advances a robust and protective health sector strategy.

Thank you Madam President.