



for a toxics-free future

May 2025

QUICK VIEWS ON THE RESUMED THIRD SESSION OF THE AD HOC OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP ON A FUTURE SCIENCE-POLICY PANEL ON CHEMICALS, WASTE AND TO PREVENT POLLUTION

In 2022, governments at UNEA-5 decided that a Science-Policy Panel (SPP) should be established to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution ([see resolution 5/8](#)). An ad hoc open-ended working group (OEWG) was established with the mandate to develop proposals for the panel.

The resumed third session of the OEWG (SPP OEWG-3.2) will be held in Punta del Este, Uruguay, from June 15-18 and will be followed by an Intergovernmental Meeting on June 20 where the SPP will be officially established.

The objective of the panel is to strengthen the science-policy interface to contribute to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution for the protection of human health and the environment. In order to achieve this objective and to safeguard the integrity of the future panel, it is important that the panel and its work is

► **Inclusive and Participatory**, ensuring that:

- There is integration of views, information, and data from stakeholders and communities impacted by chemicals, waste, and pollution, including groups in especially vulnerable situations, Indigenous Peoples, and workers.
- There is gender, regional, and sectoral balance.
- Information from local, regional, and national contexts is collected and included in relevant deliverables, and conclusions reached by the panel are communicated at national, regional, and local levels.
- Civil society representatives are included in all the work of the panel and its subsidiary bodies.
- A broad definition of knowledge is used that encompasses traditional and Indigenous Knowledge systems, as well as citizen science, grassroots monitoring, and data collection initiatives. These should be recognized as legitimate sources of evidence, with declared channels for submission and consideration.

► **Transparent**, ensuring that:

- Work processes, prioritization of issues, funding, sources of information, and decision-making are traceable.
- Documentation is publicly available and accessible.
- No information or data submitted to the panel and its subsidiary bodies or used by the panel and its subsidiary bodies should be treated as confidential, to safeguard the integrity of the panel and align with other science-policy panels.

► **Free from conflicts of interest (COI)**, through the development and implementation of a COI policy that:

- Considers both current and past engagements.
- Applies to all experts and participants involved.
- Covers the decision-making body, subsidiary bodies, committees, and all related processes.
- Requires disclosure of all real, potential, and apparent conflicts of interest.
- Establishes procedures to actively prevent conflicts of interest throughout all work and decision-making processes.
- Ensures that all information related to conflicts of interest disclosures, including evaluations, is publicly available online.

Below is a summary of key working documents and IPEN's views on the parts of the text that remain to be negotiated.

Working documents for OEWG 3.2

For the upcoming meeting, the OEWG is expected to:

- continue discussions and finalize a foundational document and its related draft decision on the establishment of the panel ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/6](#)).
- continue discussions on the recommendations for consideration by the governing body of the future panel at its first session and their related draft decision for consideration by the intergovernmental meeting ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/7](#)).
- discuss interim arrangements to be considered by the intergovernmental meeting ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/8](#)).

Foundational Document

The foundational document and its related draft decision can be found at [UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/6](#).

Preamble

The preamble currently consists of a placeholder with the understanding that aspects that are no longer covered in the Operating Principles may be considered for inclusion here.

IPEN views: The precautionary principle should be included in the preamble.



Section A. Scope, objective, and functions of the panel

The objective was agreed upon during earlier OEWGs. The five functions of the panel have also been agreed upon, to consist of: a) horizon scanning; b) conducting assessments; c) providing up-to-date and relevant information; d) facilitating information sharing; and e) capacity building. Discussions at OEWG3.1 focused on the description of the fifth function of capacity building and reached agreement within the contact group on a text but with two brackets remaining to be negotiated—whether one, both, or neither of the terms [gender inclusive][and gender responsive] will be included.

IPEN views: Overall, IPEN supports the proposed objective and functions and recommends retaining both terms “gender inclusive” and “gender responsive,” as they can serve complementary purposes. “Gender inclusive” would call for equal participation of all genders, while “gender responsive” could help address the specific needs and exposure pathways associated with gender. These include, for example, the higher exposure of women to hazardous chemicals through work in informal waste recycling or their use of personal care products. Inclusion of the term could also address the unique risks to pregnant individuals and fetuses from endocrine-disrupting chemicals.

Section B. Operating principles of the panel

The operating principles are intended to guide the work of the future panel. Several brackets remain in the text following the work of the contact groups at OEWG 3.1.

IPEN views: In order to safeguard the integrity and legitimacy of the panel, it is important that the OEWG retains language on:

- ensuring impartiality and transparency;
- the inclusion of a broad range of relevant knowledge, including Indigenous knowledge; and
- promoting inclusivity of participation.

Moreover, the OEWG needs to ensure that the operating principles lay the groundwork for relevant future work in line with the functions and objective of the panel, including through retaining language on the following aspects:

- integrating gender equality and equity in all relevant aspects of its work.
- deliverables that are focused on preventing pollution.
- incorporating the need to protect human health and the environment, with special attention to those in vulnerable situations.
- integrating capacity building into all relevant aspects of its work.
- recognizing that the sound management of chemicals and waste and prevention of pollution contributes to the full enjoyment of human rights for present and future generations.
- retaining and un-bracketing the proposed text referencing the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, the right to science, and intergenerational equity. These rights are essential for guiding the ethical foundation of the panel.

In operating principle (a ter Alt 3), the phrase “[Ensuring] [Finding] consensus...” is proposed. This language should be reconsidered, as it is not appropriate for a Science-Policy Panel that has horizon scanning as one of its primary functions. Scientific assessments must be grounded in evidence, methodological rigor, and openness to uncertainty—not constrained by the pursuit of political consensus. It is important to recognize and communicate where there is scientific consensus and equally important to protect scientific integrity from political influence. The panel must remain focused on precaution and prevention of pollution and must not risk oversimplification and face undue influence from attempts to manipulate science wherein a “consensus” process could be used to disrupt or delay actions needed to address toxic pollution.

Section C. Institutional arrangements for the panel

This section includes six subsections that outline the setup of the panel’s decision-making body (plenary/governing body), a bureau, a secretariat, committees and subsidiary bodies, the financial arrangements, and strategic partnerships.

IPEN views: IPEN supports the overall suggested design of the panel (as outlined in subsections I-IV) of including a decision-making body, a bureau, and a secretariat that are supported by committees and subsidiary bodies. Noting the importance of ensuring the integrity of the work of the panel, the inclusion of a Conflict-of-Interest Committee is strongly supported. However, subsidiary bodies that are outside the scope of the mandate of [UNEA resolution 5/8](#) or could delay or limit the outputs of the panel should not be included. Therefore, IPEN does not support the proposed Socioeconomic Subsidiary body and Prospective Error Analysis Committee.

It is important that the decision-making body and all subsidiary bodies must be open to participation and contributions from civil society to ensure transparency, credibility, and trustworthiness of the work of the panel and its outputs. This is already an established practice in all chemicals and waste-related Conventions (including Stockholm, Rotterdam, Basel, and Minamata) and their subsidiary bodies.

Regarding financial arrangements (subsection V), the proposed new trust fund will be a suitable way forward, since it is suggested that it will also accept contributions from the private sector. However, noting concerns around conflicts of interest, it needs to be guarded by strict transparency measures and guardrails that ensure that contributions do not influence the work, deliberations, and decision-making of the panel in any way.

Regarding strategic partnerships (subsection VI), it is vital for the credibility of the panel that stakeholder engagement and any partnerships are transparent and have clearly defined boundaries to prevent influence from stakeholders with conflicts of interest. Any partnerships must be based on agreed criteria, including measures preventing partnerships with entities that have conflicts of interests.

Section D. Evaluation of the operational effectiveness and impact of the panel

This section includes provisions for evaluating the efficiency, effectiveness, and impact of the panel.

IPEN Views: Periodic, independent evaluation of the work of the panel will be very important to verify that it is functioning as intended. Evaluation criteria should include transparency, inclusiveness, conflicts of interest, and relevance of outputs. An evaluation can be helpful in identifying obstacles, weaknesses, and limiting factors, and propose ways to strengthen the panel.

Recommendations for consideration by the governing body of the future panel at its first session

The draft recommendations can be found in ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/7/](#)). They include four annexes on:

1. Annex 1: Draft rules of procedure.
2. Annex 2: Draft process for determining the work programme, including prioritization.
3. Annex 3: Draft procedures for the preparation and clearance of the panel deliverables.
4. Annex 4: Draft conflict of interest policy.

Relatedly, there is also a proposal on interim arrangements to be considered by the intergovernmental meeting ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/8](#)) and an INF document forwarded from OEWG 3.1 on draft financial procedures ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/INF/8](#)).

Draft rules of procedure

The draft text of rules of procedure was prepared by the secretariat and discussed in the contact groups at OEWG 3, where some progress was made. The OEWG is expected to finalize the draft rules at OEWG 3.2.

IPEN Views: IPEN notes that the draft rules of procedure overall contain similar language as in other chemicals and waste frameworks, but there are some instances where there is a lack of clarity that needs to be addressed. These include:

- for future decision-making (Rules 35-45 and 49), the right to vote is an important mechanism, and it is important that the OEWG ensures that both procedural and substantial issues can be determined, when necessary, by a majority vote.
- ensuring that the decision-making body and subsidiary bodies are open to participation and contributions from observers.

Draft process for determining the work programme, including prioritization

This draft was prepared by the secretariat, and discussions were started in contact groups during OEWG 3.1, where several brackets were introduced. The discussions were especially focused on what would fall under the responsibilities of the secretariat, the Interdisciplinary Expert Committee, and the bureau. New text was introduced in brackets, including text that would increase transparency and stakeholder participation.

IPEN Views: Current bracketed text allowing for observer input should be retained. Provisions on conflicts of interest need to be added to Annex 3 to ensure that any submitters and commenters publicly declare any potential, actual, or perceived COIs.

Draft procedures for the preparation and clearance of panel deliverables

This draft was prepared by the secretariat, and discussions were started in contact groups. However, the discussions did not cover the full draft text.

IPEN Views: To protect the integrity and credibility of the panel, it is important:

- To include conflict-of-interest provisions at all stages, including the review stage. Therefore, paragraph 25 should be deleted. In addition, “industry” should be removed from paragraph 37. Instead, a separate paragraph should specify the review process for information from industry.
- That all stages of this process are transparent, including through public access to data and sources. Therefore, review comments and the final draft of the deliverable should be made publicly available online. Also, Section E should include the same language as the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES): the secretariat “should provide access to these materials on request.”
- That the process ensures connecting the local to the global, for example, through ensuring that the scoping processes ensure information gathering from experiences at the national, regional, and local levels and that deliverables are adapted to local needs.
- That the process is science focused. Therefore, paragraph 28 should be deleted, as well as the word “socioeconomic” in paragraph 29.
- That section G on “Procedures to safeguard commercially sensitive information” and the related Annexes II-III are deleted or significantly edited to only include a statement that information on the health and safety of humans and the environment cannot be regarded as confidential, similar to Article 9(5) under the Stockholm Convention. Neither IPBES nor the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) have procedures for safeguarding commercially sensitive information ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/INF/7](#)) and including such a process in this panel would counter principles on transparency and significantly jeopardize the credibility of the future panel. For further information, see [IPEN's previous submission](#) on the topic.

Draft conflict of interest policy

The draft text on the conflict-of-interest policy was discussed in part during OEWG 3.2; however, several brackets and discussions remain.

IPEN Views: To ensure that the future panel is viewed as credible and trustworthy and able to provide independent, scientifically sound data suitable to inform policy work, the development and implementation of a strong Conflict of Interest (COI) policy will be crucial, and the COI policy will need to ensure:

- That the evaluation of potential conflicts of interest accounts for current potential conflicts of interest and also potential conflicts of interest resulting from recent engagements. Therefore, “from the past four years” should be retained in paragraph 12, and “current” should be deleted from paragraph 15.
- That information on potential conflicts of interest for all participants is made public, including outcomes of COI investigations, to ensure transparency of work and secure public confidence in the legitimacy of the work of the panel.
- That the scope of the COI policy applies to all involved experts and partnerships that are engaged in the work of the panel. Therefore, all roles mentioned in Part B, paragraph 7, should be retained.
- That the COI policy and form require disclosure of all real, potential, and apparent conflicts of interest.
- That the mandate of the COI committee goes beyond reviewing the submissions but also includes procedures for managing identified conflicts and making recommendations on measures needed to prevent conflicts of interest.

For more information, see [IPEN’s previous submission](#).

Proposal on interim arrangements

It is important to ensure transparent work and decision processes, as well as observer participation, during the preparatory activities and any intersessional work.

Financial procedures

This draft was prepared by the secretariat, but there was no time to consider it in the contact groups during OEWG 3.1. It has been forwarded to OEWG 3.2 as an information document ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/INF/8](#)).

IPEN Views: IPEN supports the draft financial procedures and notes that both financial and in-kind contributions should also be published on the SPP website to ensure transparency. This would also help show the importance of the engagement by non-governmental organizations, developing countries, and countries in transition, which are often only able to provide in-kind contributions.

As noted above, in regard to financial arrangements, the proposed new trust fund will be a suitable way forward, since it is suggested that the panel may also accept contributions from the private sector. However, noting concerns around conflicts of interest, it needs to be guarded by strict transparency measures and guardrails that ensure that contributions do not influence the work, deliberations, and decision-making of the panel in any way.