

Tuesday afternoon – March 1st – chemicals

Mr. Chair, and distinguished delegates,

Thank you for the panelists' presentations which were interesting and thought-provoking.

I speak on behalf of the Women's major group.

Women's health is differently affected by harmful chemicals. The effects of toxic chemicals are moderated and in some cases amplified by a number of factors present in many women's lives, including stress, inadequate nutrition, poverty, and pregnancy. Therefore measures need to be taken protect all women of child bearing age from exposures to toxic chemicals or chemicals incompletely tested for safety, especially women who live in poverty and with high levels of stress and inadequate nutrition.

We call on governments to:

- 1) Implement meaningful participation of women and civil society on government committees and projects concerning chemical safety.

Women are the "first environment" for the child, and we know that we may transfer harmful substances that indeed we all carry in our bodies, to the developing child. (who because of rapid rate of cell differentiation, is exquisitely sensitive to the effects of toxic chemicals.)

Women's major group has particular concerns about chemicals in consumer products, some of which may be :

hormone disrupting;
toxic to the reproductive system;
mutagenic;
carcinogenic;
bio-accumulative and persistent.

We have special concerns about chemicals able to cross the brain and the placental barriers. In other words when a chemical is identified through biomonitoring in the cord blood of a newborn child, indicating that the child has been born pre-polluted, those chemicals should be severely regulated until their safety is proven.

Therefore, women need complete information about the chemical substances contained in the products we buy and use on a daily basis in order to protect our own health and the health of future generations.

We call on governments to

- 2) Develop and implement national regulatory policies that require sufficient safety data on chemical substances before sale is allowed, essentially, no data, no market.
- 3) Create transparency and greater implementation of PRTRs, and other information- disseminating mechanisms.

In terms of strengthening national capacity for sound chemical management, governments should:

- 4) Support the continuation of UNEP's work on financing the chemicals agenda and begin development of a global cost recovery scheme to internalize costs associated with chemicals management along with pilot projects in selected countries.

The Women's Major Group furthermore supports:

- 6) A progressive ban on production and use of highly hazardous pesticides;
- 7) The expediting of the financing, inventory, environmentally sound treatment, and comprehensive clean-up of obsolete stockpiles by governments and intl. agencies.
- 8) A global ban on lead in paints;
- 9) A global mercury treaty by 2013 that effectively addresses all sources of mercury from human activities.

We call on funding entities to:

- 10) Increase availability of financial and technical resources for developing and transition countries to enable full implementation and effectiveness evaluation of multilateral chemicals agreements, including SAICM, the Stockholm, Rotterdam and Basil Conventions.

- And again, women must play a strong role in the implementation and evaluation of these multilateral agreements at the national and international level.

Thank you, Mr. Chair

Sharyle Patton – WECF

Sabina Mensah - VAM