

Workers and Trade Unions Statement

Intergovernmental Preparatory Meeting - CSD19 - Session on Chemicals
Statement on behalf of Workers and Trade Unions

Gracias señor presidente.

Protecting workers and the environment from exposure to hazardous substances is fundamental for achieving sustainable development. We very much support the SG report when it says that workplace prevention is essential in this regard.

Nonetheless, Chair, we consider workers' protection needs to start from the development of chemical substances. As the women representative expressed, the precautionary principle, and the no data, no market principle play a fundamental role and need to be reflected in the document as guiding principles for policies emerging from this CSD cycle.

Chair, and answering your question regarding the means by which we could strengthen the governance of chemicals at the national level, allow me to highlight the importance of Decent Work as a precondition for avoiding fatalities, injuries and diseases related to chemical hazards. Decent working conditions, the right to information, to receive training, and to be protected when denouncing mismanagement of chemical substances complement chemicals regulations giving workers' a chance to help in their compliance at the national and workplace level.

Chair, it is important to strengthen the many instruments related to Chemicals, including ILO Convention 170. However, Chair, we all know we are far from achieving Johannesburg goals. As the EU delegate mentioned, a broader chemical legal instrument needs to be explored.

Finally, chair, Public participation in the debate on chemicals is key in raising the profile of this issue. An informed civil society, with empowered and informed trade unions, can put chemicals very high in the agenda, as government-union cooperation has shown for example in Uruguay, thanks to the QSP support. To conclude, chair, an informed citizen, both as a worker and as a consumer, and the right regulation and its enforcement, are two complementary dimensions for a democratic and sound management of chemicals.

If you allow me, Chair, I would like to ask a question to the panel. ICCA representative raised the importance of working through the supply chain to ensure sound use of chemicals. We fully agree on this. We would like to know from both the Convention and ICCA representatives if they have explored means for better tracking chemical substances in products, as for us this remains a major gap in ensuring sound management of chemicals.

Thank you very much for your time and attention,
Ms Anabella Rosemberg