

NGO Major Groups Intervention

CSD18

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Five brief points for consideration by the Commission at this 18th review session on chemicals

1. Information about chemical substances is lacking

Very little information is available on 80,000-100,000 chemicals currently registered for use, even though Chapter 19 of Agenda 21 emphasizes that the broadest possible awareness of chemical risks is a prerequisite for achieving chemical safety. Most chemicals in use have not been adequately tested for harm and/or for their combined impacts on children and other vulnerable groups.

First steps toward a solution: Implement “no data no market” regulatory policies and a global system for providing information on chemicals in products to consumers and others in the supply chain

2. Highly hazardous pesticides continue to cause harm

Workers are extremely vulnerable to highly hazardous and obsolete pesticides which continue to harm human, animal and environmental health. This is aggravated by the huge numbers of people involved in agriculture. According to the ILO, nearly half the workforce is involved in agriculture in South and Southeast Asia, and in sub-Saharan Africa, two thirds of all employed workers engage in agricultural activities.

First steps toward a solution: Full implementation of a progressive ban of highly hazardous pesticides and implementation of ecological agriculture techniques

3. Mercury continues to contaminate fish

Fish is a staple food needed for protein in many parts of the world, including Asia, Africa and Small Island Developing States. However, fish are widely contaminated with mercury, which is highly toxic to humans, especially children. The global community will soon begin negotiations for a global legally binding instrument on mercury.

First steps toward a solution: Negotiate a strong treaty that addresses all human sources of mercury

4. The ewaste crisis continues

Toxic chemicals and metals in electronic products cause harm when 20 – 50 million tons of wastes are transferred each year from developed to developing countries that cannot handle them safely.

First steps toward a solution: Hold the SAICM emerging issue workshop on chemicals in the lifecycle of electrical and electronic products to address upstream, midstream and downstream issues. The global community agreed on this workshop one year ago but it has languished without funding. Action is urgently needed.

5. Financing: Internalization of costs has not been broadly implemented

Financial considerations are usually a controversial part of discussions and negotiations involving chemical safety. Unfortunately, we believe that the amount of money actually needed to reach the 2020 goal and establish infrastructure for chemicals management in developing countries is far greater than the amount that donor countries can provide. For this reason, greater attention needs to be paid to developing and implementing economic instruments to internalize costs. When chemicals are produced or used in a country, the Government is obligated to ensure that human health and the environment are not harmed as a result of chemical exposure or chemical accidents. The costs Governments incur in fulfilling this obligation are economic externalities that arise as a result of decisions by industries to manufacture and use chemicals. Without internalization, these costs amount to a subsidy of the private sector which is inconsistent with Rio Principle 16.

First steps toward a solution: Develop and implement a global cost recovery scheme. The global chemical industry has an annual turnover of approximately \$3.1 trillion USD per year. If a global cost recovery scheme yielded only 0.1% of the industry's annual turnover, more than \$3 billion USD would be available for sound chemicals management annually.

Public interest NGOs remain committed to the full implementation of SAICM, its 2020 goal, and a Toxics Free Future