



## WECF, Women Engage for a Common Future Stakeholder submission on key elements for an ICCM5 High-level Declaration (HLD) on the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020

28.10.2020

Dear Madam or Sir,

As an international ecofeminist network of 150 women and civil organizations NGOs committed to build a healthy environment and active at international level for moving towards a toxic-free future, and as an active stakeholder within SAICM and the intersessional process towards a SMCM beyond 2020, Women Engage for a Common Future (WECF) welcomes the opportunity to contribute to a strong sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

Environment worldwide continues to suffer from air, water and land contamination, impairing the health and welfare of millions. Referring to WHO 1,6 billion people worldwide dying every year from the exposure to hazardous chemicals. Children are born pre-polluted. Biodiversity is decreasing dramatically. Chemical industry has one of the biggest CO2 footprints - Chemical production will double by 2030. Waste generation is projected to increase from 1.3 billion tons per year to 2.2 billion tons per year by 2025, with high increases in middle-income developing countries. There is an urgent need to develop a strong sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

Please find here WECF's submission on essential elements for a possible ICCM5 High-level Declaration (HLD) on the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020. Our submission is structured according to [your questions](#).

*What would you consider the most important aspects and key messages for strengthening the sound management of chemicals and waste and political?*

- Protect human health and the environment from the harmful effects of chemicals and waste, towards healthy lives and a sustainable, safe planet for all.
- Therefore: Extending and strengthening the Sustainable, Non-Toxic and Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste (SMCW) is critical as the world is faced with new and existing challenges of extremely hazardous substances and waste, that are expected to last for many years beyond the lifecycle of a SAICM follow up. The responsibility for the well-being of future generations must be the driver a real ambitious approach.
- Urgent actions are needed before we pass the point of no return, requiring a systemic transformation of the system.

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### **Principles**

- The precautionary principle, the prevention and elimination of harmful chemicals, should have priority and be at the basis of all actions of the future Beyond2020 framework. There must be a clear commitment and priority for safe non-chemical methods and alternatives, including agroecology and ecosystem-based approaches to agriculture. Based on the core principles of the precautionary principle, the polluter-pays principle and a reversal the burden of proof, a future SAICM must establish a clear hierarchy, the prevention and elimination should stand at first place, followed by the principle of minimization.
- Sustainable, Non-Toxic and SMCW is to be based on the common principles under SAICM, those which are already mentioned in the co-chairs paper. These principles should be explicitly highlighted in Beyond 2020, namely: intergenerational equity, precaution, substitution, polluter pays, right to know, good governance, liability and compensation, Indigenous peoples' rights and labour rights, and full participation of women. These are internationally agreed principles that must be included as a minimum. Regional agreements like the Aarhus Convention, Bamako Convention and others should also be included.

### **Gender / Women / Vulnerable Groups**

- The varied roles of all genders in society shape their exposure to chemicals, which makes the gender dimensions of the sound management of chemicals and waste highly relevant. The susceptibility to chemical exposure varies by sex (ibid.), due to physical and physiological social characteristics.<sup>1</sup> Advancing knowledge on the linkages between chemicals and gender is key to improve the understanding of impacts of chemicals on human health and nature.<sup>2</sup>
- Therefore: Gender considerations should be part of project planning, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, which will help avoid inequality between women, men and non-binary persons, and better address ways to minimize chemical exposures and enhance a vision of a toxic free future for all.
- Women and Chemicals should be established as an issue of concern. Thus, gender mainstreaming into each step of sound chemicals and waste management decisions at the national and international levels is crucial for achieving effective and inclusive processes.

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<sup>1</sup> WECF (2017): Women and Chemicals. The impact of hazardous chemical on women. A thought starter based on an experts' workshop. <http://www.wecf.org/de>

<sup>2</sup> SAICM Secretariat (2018): Gender and the sound management of chemicals and waste. Policy Brief. [http://www.saicm.org/Portals/12/Documents/SDGs/SAICM\\_Gender\\_Policy\\_Brief.pdf](http://www.saicm.org/Portals/12/Documents/SDGs/SAICM_Gender_Policy_Brief.pdf)

- Sustainable and non-toxic SMCW should reflect especially the **most vulnerable groups** such as children, women, pregnant women, indigenous people as standards to evaluate negative impact from hazardous chemicals and waste.

### **Agenda 2030**

- The sound management of chemicals and waste is a crucial, cross-cutting aspect of achieving the objectives of the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. The sustainable non-toxic SMCW beyond 2020 must raise the political awareness and ensure ambitious measurable actions through a new policy approach to the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

### **Finance**

- Agree on strong financial mechanisms to support the implementation of a sustainable non-toxic SMCW. The polluter-pays principle should hold those who caused the damage responsible. The key to securing funding for chemical safety is the internalization of costs within relevant producer industries. A new sustainable financial mechanism should ensure that funding is provided to all eligible stakeholders, including the civil society groups and academia (using existing mechanisms such as the GEF, the Special Programme, and a follow-up of the Quick-Start-Programme as well as new mechanisms, including bilateral and multilateral partnerships, development assistance, donor countries support will help develop an independent sustainable funding mechanism for sound chemicals and waste management that includes the promotion of non-chemical alternatives.)

*What should the scope, key elements and messages of the ICCM5 HLD cover?*

*Considering, inter alia:*

- *the current context (COVID-19, economic recovery interventions, and the need to make significant progress on SMCW).*
- *enhanced contribution of the SMCW to implement the 2030 Agenda and address present and future needs.*
- *Progress in efforts undertaken to date, and critical gaps to be addressed.*
- *Our activity on public health becomes even more important than before the crisis:*

### **Covid-19**

- The additional challenges that Covid-19 has added to sustainable non-toxic SMCW and how this challenge can be addressed. Even more strongly than before, we need to raise awareness on the importance of healthy societies and the impacts of environmental and

chemical pollution as a factor of preventable death and reduced resilience against crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, sustainable non-toxic SMCW needs to promote the Precautionary Principle as an instrument to mitigate crises and avoid the risk that the Covid crisis is used to eliminate, reduce or postpone already agreed environmental standards and regulations on hazardous chemicals and waste. As recent studies of the UN have shown, women have been particularly impacted by the Covid-19 crisis, and the longer-term health impact on women who have survived are different and therefore a gender-responsive analysis and approach is required. This underlines that also in terms of protection from hazardous chemicals as part of Covid-19 measures, a gender-perspective is required.

#### **Issues of Concern**

- Issues of Concern (IoCs) have not progressed adequately to a level with increased and more ambitious obligations for worldwide actions. Just by ignoring the IoCs (formerly EPI) they have not disappeared, on the contrary, the health and environment impacts of issues such as endocrine disrupting chemicals have only worsened over the last SAICM period. Even if targets and goals have not been reached, the urgency to address IoC issues has only increased. Instead of sunseting these issues, they should be assessed and upgraded as priority issues for the Beyond2020 process. A basis for this assessment could be based on the criteria from the NGO information document “New Mechanism of Action: criteria for elevation of obligations to progress SAICM IoCs in the post 2020 multilateral regime for chemicals and waste.”<sup>3</sup>
- Issues of Concern have to be extended with upcoming and new knowledge and challenges in regards of chemical pollution of environment and health, such as hazardous chemicals in plastics and plastic waste.

#### **Gender equality**

- Gender equality is an integral part of the implementation of sustainable and non-toxic SMCW, including at the SAICM secretariat and at national levels. Relevant institutions and actors should be supported in their gender mainstreaming activities through proven instruments and strategies such as creating Gender Focal Points, providing capacity building, and developing Gender Action Plans and filling the gap of gender-related financing mechanisms.
- Women are more than 50 percent of global population, are agents of change and contribute with specific experiences and knowledge. This can help reveal challenges previously unnoticed and developing alternative, gender-just solutions. SAICM Beyond2020 needs to

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.wecf.org/de/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/NGO-Information-doc-on-IoC-criteria.pdf>

ensure women in all diversity (including indigenous women, women with chemical health impacts etc) are equality represented in all decision-making processes.

*How should the ICCM5 HLD be structured, including participation, responsibilities, and processes to address current challenges?*

- Ensure participation of the full range of relevant stakeholders, including labour unions, NGOs, the private sector, women organisations and gender experts to recognize the multi-stakeholder and multisectoral approach and increase ownership and commitment by all stakeholders.
- Emphasise that participation in the process is equally guaranteed in person and digital to all stakeholders, including NGOs and stakeholders from developing countries and countries in transition.
- Women / Gender: SMCW must be gender transformative. Women's (and other genders) full, equal and effective participation needs to be ensured at all levels, in all sectors, and among all stakeholders.

For further information and if you have any additional questions please do not hesitate to contact WECF at [sascha.gabizon@wecf.org](mailto:sascha.gabizon@wecf.org) and [johanna.hausmann@wecf-consultant.org](mailto:johanna.hausmann@wecf-consultant.org)