

Proposed Resolution on the sound management of chemicals and waste

Concept Note

Submitted by the Government of Switzerland

This note summarises proposals for a resolution by UNEA 5 on key issues concerning the sound management chemicals and waste. It is proposed to cover issues where actions by UNEA is necessary at this session of UNEA, and to follow up issues raised by earlier sessions where further action is necessary in the light of the reports submitted to the Assembly by United Nations Environment Programme.

The sound management of chemicals and waste remains central to UNEP's strategy to tackle climate change, loss of nature, pollution and to contributing to achieving the 2030 Agenda. UNEA itself plays a leading role among the global bodies working in this area, and the momentum must be maintained and enhanced if our goals are to be achieved.

The main operational elements proposed for a resolution are:

- To implement a five-year extension of the Special Programme on Institutional Strengthening for the chemicals cluster – the possibility of an extension was envisaged when the programme was established by UNEA in 2015, and has been recommended by the Executive Board of the Special Programme. This decision must be taken at this UNEA session, before the Programme expires.

This decision should be set in the context of the Integrated approach to financing sound management of chemicals and waste, together with a signal of the need for continued support for the chemicals and waste focal area in the current GEF replenishment, including within integrated programming.

- To provide a clear signal from the Assembly, as the world's highest-level decision-making body on the environment, to the forthcoming of meeting of the International Conference on Chemical Management (ICCM 5). ICCM 5 will take place before the next meeting of the Assembly. ICCM will agree a new multi-stakeholder, multi-sectoral instrument for the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020. This must be an ambitious and effective instrument if there is to be accelerated progress to achieving the goal of reducing harm to health and the environment through the sound management of chemicals and waste.

The target set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development to achieve by 2020 the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes has not been met. UNEA should commit to maintaining the integrity of the 2030 Agenda by raising the ambition and ensuring continuous action by redoubling efforts to achieve the targets in an accelerated time frame, reflecting the urgency conveyed in the Agenda.

Specifically, the resolution should give a mandate UNEP to play a full part in the negotiation and in the implementation of the new framework, along with other UN agencies and global organisations, and should mandate UNEP to host the Secretariat - as it has done for the current Strategic Approach to international Chemicals Management.

- To acknowledge and respond to the reports which UNEP has presented, in response to requests made at the third and fourth meetings of the Assembly, and which provide assessments of progress, identify areas requiring increased efforts, and guidance to members states and other stakeholders regarding the sound management of chemicals, and waste.¹ The resolution should call for intensified action by all relevant international bodies, including ICCM 5, and other relevant stakeholders.

In particular, the resolution should note that the report on “Issues of Concern” – which concluded that although progress has been made, global action so far it is insufficient to address the risk to human health and the environment posed by the issues of concern or emerging policy issues which have been identified by ICCM or in the UNEA 4 resolution on chemicals and waste. The resolution might request UNEP to gather and assess options for further international action to address these issues of concern, based on views from Member States and other stakeholders. It should also highlight the findings of the report on impacts of pesticides and fertilizers that business as usual is not an option, and adverse impacts of pesticides and fertilizers will increase unless fundamental change takes place.

Member States may identify other elements which might be added to a resolution on the management of chemicals and waste, mindful however of the need to focus on a manageable range of issues.

Should your country have questions and / or be interested in joining Switzerland as co-sponsor, please contact the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment in Bern (Michel Tschirren, michel.tschirren@bafu.admin.ch, Tel +41 58 462 01 64).

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¹ These reports are: The Green and Sustainable Chemistry Framework, together with a compilation of illustrative examples; An Assessment of Issues of Concern”: Chemicals and Waste Issues Posing Risks to Human Health and the Environment; An assessment of options for strengthening the science-policy interface at the international level for the sound management of chemicals and waste; A report on the environmental and health impacts of pesticides and fertilizers and ways of minimizing them; and A report on the environmental impacts of antimicrobial resistance and the causes for the development and spread of resistance in the environment. The reports may be found at <https://www.unep.org/resources/report/chemicals-and-waste-reports-unea-5>. There is also a report on An assessment on linkages with other clusters related to chemicals and waste management and options to coordinate and cooperate on areas of common interest, which was commissioned by the Open-Ended Working Group of the Strategic Approach to International Chemical Management (SAICM).