

## **Science-Policy Panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution (OEWG 1.2 )**

### **General statement from *Research Centre for Gender, Family and Environment in Development (CGFED)***

CGFED is a Non-Government Organization in Vietnam and a member of International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN).

We agree with IPEN's views that the main focus of the future panel should be on chemicals and that the panel should work complementarily with existing policy frameworks and expert bodies. We also believe that horizon scanning is principal function of the panel, and that this function is crucial to reach the objective of the panel, as described in the UNEA resolution, since it could help address current and future knowledge gaps on chemicals.

[Our organization](#) has more than 30 years of experience doing science and policy work on chemicals and gender. We have found that women in the electronics industry are exposed to chemicals that make them more likely to miscarry<sup>1</sup>. We have found high levels of pesticides in the breastmilk of women from rural areas, and we have found that women working in traditional crafts are affected by chemicals in the plastics they use<sup>2</sup>. We have also found that chemicals from extractive mining industries are harming women's health<sup>3</sup>. The women that we work with are repeatedly exposed to multiple chemicals in their work and daily-life.

We know all genders are impacted differently from the exposure to harmful chemicals due to biological reasons and gender roles. Exposure to toxic chemicals from different sources damages women's health, including their reproductive health. Women are generally underrepresented and often disenfranchised or excluded entirely from positions of power and decision-making about chemical safety, waste, and environment. This creates an unbalance of power and injustice that must be corrected. Women have also been underrepresented or not represented at all in studies concerning chemical exposures and health outcomes.

This is why the action plan for gender equality is becoming more urgent and recognized at the global level as the SDGs Sustainable Development Goals: Gender equality and equality are set as a major priority of the SDGs and Gender issues are integrated into all targets<sup>4</sup>.

We therefore call for gender mainstreaming at every step of sound chemical and waste management decisions at the national and international levels to be critical to achieving efficient and inclusive processes.

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<sup>1</sup> CGFED-IPEN, Stories of Women Workers in Vietnam's Electronics Industry, 2017

<https://ipen.org/documents/electronics-workers-vietnamese-women-report>

<sup>2</sup> SEI, A day in the life of a female handicraft worker in Viet Nam, <https://www.sei.org/featured/day-life-female-handicraft-worker-viet-nam>

<sup>3</sup> CGFED-Oxfam, Gender impact assessment for the extractive industry in Vietnam, 2021

<sup>4</sup> UN, Sustainable Development Goals, Goal 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls, <https://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/gender-equality/>

Finally, we believe it is important for the panel to consider gender as part of decisions regarding the functions, scope and principles of the future panel, which will help decrease inequalities between women and men and address better ways to reduce chemical exposure for all, contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution.