

Needs and Questions the Panel May Handle

Request for Written Submissions from Member States and Relevant Stakeholders

Member states, during the resumed first session of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG1.2), requested the Secretariat of the OEWG to solicit input from Member States and relevant stakeholders regarding the **needs** and **questions** the panel may handle in order to inform negotiations through the OEWG process (OEWG2 and OEWG3).

In support of this request, member States are invited to provide submissions through their respective national focal points (list of focal points available [at this link](#)). Non-government stakeholders are invited to submit their submissions on behalf of their organization or group. Once complete, please submit this filled document to SPP-CWP@un.org. All submissions will be uploaded online and will be summarized in an INF document in order to inform the work undertaken at OEWG2 and OEWG3.

Please complete and submit this form by 5 September 2023.

Several documents prepared by the secretariat for OEWG1.2 are of relevance to this submission, including:

- The Mapping and Gap analysis that was presented at UNEA 4 ([UNEP/EA.4/INF.9](#))
- The UNEP report “Assessment of options for strengthening the science-policy interface at the international level for the sound management of chemicals and waste” <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/33808/OSSP.pdf>
- UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/INF/1 - [UNEA Resolution 5/8 entitled “Science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution”](#)
- The stakeholder survey conducted between OEWG 1.1 and OEWG 1.2, which was summarized in Information document “Stakeholder Engagement Feedback” ([UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.1/INF/6](#))
- Reports of OEWG1.1 and OEWG1.2, available with all other meeting documents on the [OEWG website](#)

Contact information

What is your name/surname?

Isabelle Mayr

Who are you submitting on behalf of?

Government of Canada

Are you a national focal point?

Yes

What is your country?

Canada

What is your title?

Unit Head, International Engagement for Chemicals. Environment and Climate Change Canada

What is your gender?

Female

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1. Please list and if appropriate briefly describe, your preference for which needs the panel may handle. (If possible, please rank your responses, where 1 indicates your top preference):

In its resolution 5/8 (Res.5/8, the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) decided that a science-policy panel (the Panel) should be established to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution. While paragraph 3(g) of Res. 5/8 indicates that the Panel should have “the flexibility to respond, to the extent possible, to the needs identified by stakeholders and agreed to by its member Governments, and to fulfil its principal functions”, Canada is of the view that Res. 5/8 also sets a strong foundation and identifies key needs that the panel should address.

In this written submission, Canada aims to identify and reiterate some priority needs that the Panel should address, consistent with Res. 5/8 and with the previous submission made by Canada to the UN Environment Program on the Panel’s Operating Principles. Please note that the priority needs described below are not ranked in any order of importance:

- Need for identification and exploration of the connections and interlinkages between chemicals, waste, and pollution issues with the global agendas on biodiversity, climate change, and sustainable development, and include those considerations in the process for determining the subjects of assessments and the policy options (outputs) presented.
- Need for broad, scientifically sound and evidence-based assessments for identifying emerging issues, for monitoring trends related to environmental change, human health biomonitoring and surveillance, risk-management of hazardous chemicals and waste, the production and use of chemicals and other relevant economic indicators, amongst other trends, and for detailed assessments of global or other issues that are not included in the mandates of, or otherwise not addressed by, existing science-policy interface (SPI) bodies, relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), and other instruments and intergovernmental organizations in the chemicals and waste cluster. In these instances, and particularly for emerging issues, close and continuous communication and coordination with relevant bodies would be necessary to prevent duplication of work. While the Global Chemicals Outlook (GCO) reports have done some of the work outlined above, the Panel could conduct this type of assessments on a more regular or as needed basis, without requiring a UNEA resolution to initiate the work, or undertake complementary assessments to the GCO reports to fill gaps and avoid duplication of efforts.
- Need to address truly emerging issues, i.e. issues that are just being identified as potentially problematic and would benefit from further exploration to circumscribe the problems, and to fill key gaps in scientific research and science-policy interface.
- Need to consider substances as a group (classes) rather than substances one at the time.
- Need to encourage and support communication and collaboration between scientists, policy-makers, and stakeholders, including Indigenous organizations, NGOs, youth representatives, etc., in order to consider diverse expertise, knowledge, and perspectives, and to facilitate inclusive participation, in the development of policy options (outputs).
- Need to promote interdisciplinary and involve experts with a broad range of expertise, including social and natural scientists with a range of expertise (e.g. health, environment, labour, economy, etc.) in the Panel’s work to ensure its credibility with respect to health and other impacts related to chemicals, waste, and pollution and to the policy outputs produced.
- Need to involve and collaborate with organizations and stakeholders that promote social justice and the rights of underrepresented and disproportionately affected populations, especially women and girls, children, youth and young adults, workers, Indigenous peoples, and people living in situations of vulnerability, given the disproportionate impacts that chemicals, waste, and pollution have on these groups.
- Need to involve and collaborate with the World Health Organization (WHO), as well as with other relevant intergovernmental organizations in the other sectors mentioned above (e.g. labour, human rights, economy, etc.), and those of the chemical and waste cluster.

- Need to encourage participation of experts from developing countries in the Panel’s work. This includes the need for mechanisms to provide opportunities to meaningfully participate remotely and to address connectivity issues, language barriers, and capacity constraints.
- Need for policy options (outputs) to address the urgency for action, and be anticipatory and/or in accordance with the precautionary principle to prevent or reduce adverse impacts on human health, biodiversity, and the environment.
- Need to ensure that outputs are actionable, clear, and relevant to policy-makers.
- Need to disseminate information and reports and to raise the profile of chemicals, waste, and pollution issues, including emerging issues, with policy-makers, stakeholders, and the public.
- Need for information management related to chemicals (various sources, data, and gaps exist among a breadth of organizations/owners) and the need for integration and consolidation of information in view of the breadth and variety (sometimes piecemeal) of information, initiatives, and mandates related to management of chemicals and waste.
- Need for policies to be in place to avoid actual, potential, or perceived conflicts of interest at all steps of the work of the panel.

2. Please list, and if appropriate briefly describe, your preference for which questions the panel may handle. (If possible, please rank your responses, where 1 indicates your top preference):

Canada is of the view that it is still early in the process for identifying specific questions that would be appropriate for the Panel to handle as these would depend on the final recommendation on the Panel’s scope, functions, and process for determining and executing its work. While we recommend the OEWG to first focus on discussing and outlining those items, Canada would like to offer input on the types of questions that the Panel could handle, along some **preliminary** options or ideas, in order to inform subsequent discussions. Furthermore, Canada emphasizes that the questions should not lead to duplication of work. Please note that the types of questions described below are not ranked in any kind of hierarchy:

- Questions related to the connections and interlinkages between chemicals, waste, and pollution issues, including those related to the global agendas on biodiversity, climate change, and sustainable development, across the global value chain.

Preliminary options/ideas:

- The Panel could be tasked with providing advice on how to integrate science into policy/risk management frameworks to help developing countries build their institutional capacity on these issues.
- The Panel might be tasked with developing a response with respect to the management of chemicals and waste to address and help achieve Target 7 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework,¹ entitled “Pollution reduced, halving nutrient loss and pesticide risk.”
- The panel could perhaps look at how options or solutions to address chemicals, waste, and pollution issues can also support the transition to a green, circular, low carbon economy without potentially causing larger unintended negative consequences for the future.
- The panel could include exploring issues related to the risk management of important pharmaceuticals for human health, where there are trade-offs between human health and environmental harm.

¹ Target 7 of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework commits Parties to “reduce pollution risks and the negative impact of pollution from all sources, by 2030, to levels that are not harmful to biodiversity and ecosystem functions and services, considering cumulative effects, including: reducing excess nutrients lost to the environment by at least half including through more efficient nutrient cycling and use; reducing the overall risk from pesticides and highly hazardous chemicals by at least half including through integrated pest management, based on science, taking into account food security and livelihoods; and also preventing, reducing, and working towards eliminating plastic pollution.”

- Questions related to issues that have far-reaching implications and that are beyond the mandate and expertise of individual MEAs, international instruments, or intergovernmental bodies. These cross-cutting issues could be identified through the horizon-scanning function or nominated by relevant stakeholders or partners, including MEAs, international instruments, intergovernmental bodies, accredited civil society organizations, organizations representing Indigenous Peoples, industry groups or associations, academic institutions, or other SPI bodies.

Preliminary options/ideas:

- Building on the ideas presented in the assessment of option for strengthening the SPI, the Panel could be tasked with conducting a global assessment on the capacity of Member States for the destruction of specific waste, such as POP waste. This would be beneficial to both the Basel and Stockholm Conventions.
 - The Panel might be tasked with conducting a global assessment/study on the impact of climate change on the movement, transport, and re-emission potential for highly hazardous chemicals such as POPs and mercury.
 - The Panel could potentially undertake a global study on alternatives to products banned, or under consideration to be banned, to avoid regrettable substitutions, including a mechanism to collect and share more data on substances being used in manufacturing.
- Questions related to chemicals, waste management, and pollution issues that are relevant for the implementation of One Health and related international initiatives.²

Preliminary options/ideas:

- Despite the mention of the “collective need for clean water, energy and air” and “healthy ecosystems” the chemicals, waste, and pollution aspects of One Health are often essentially “overlooked” due to a focus on disease, particularly zoonotic diseases. Therefore, the Panel could potentially contribute to advance global One Health initiatives and to explore linkages and cross cutting issues as existing work is typically done in silos.

² One Health, as defined by the World Health Organization’s One Health High-Level Expert Panel, is: *an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals, and ecosystems. It recognizes that the health of humans, domesticated and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and interdependent. The approach mobilizes multiple sectors, disciplines, and communities at varying levels of society to work together to foster well-being and tackle threats to health and ecosystems, while addressing the collective need for clean water, energy, and air; safe and nutritious food; taking action on climate change; and contributing to sustainable development.*