

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?

Click or tap here to enter text.

Who are you submitting on behalf of?

EU and its 27 Member States

Are you a national focal point?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What is your country?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What is your title?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What is your gender?

Click or tap here to enter text.

What is your email address?

Click or tap here to enter text.

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):**

Needs is not a concept that occurs in UNEA 5/8. It is therefore prone to differences in definition or interpretation and may lead to input that will be difficult to combine. In our view, "Needs" would refer to the typology of "clients" (e.g. UN bodies and MEA's) and the type of products of the panel (as in the IPCC they produce regular reports, thematic reports, and special reports according to the needs of the moment).

Against this background, we have the following preliminary suggestions:

- With regards to the needs the panel may handle, we suggest the use of a broad scope. Focusing on all relevant scientific and technical matters related to chemicals, waste and prevention of pollution together, but also separately.
- The future panel should be able to tackle cross-cutting issues that none of the existing relevant Science-Policy Interfaces are able to take on due to the limitations in their mandates without duplicating the work of other international instruments and intergovernmental bodies.
- The panel should ensure the engagement of all relevant scientific actors and sectors, in particular the Health Sector (including WHO, ILO) as well as the economic and social sectors.
- The panel could play an important role in 'contextualization': collecting, reviewing, digesting, synthesizing and translating i) specific policy needs/questions into research questions and ii) scientific information into actionable information for policymakers. In particular, the panel should provide up-to-date, science-based, assessments reports summarizing knowledge on chemicals, waste & prevention of pollution or science-based reports describing alternatives and ways to implement them for chemicals that will be phased out.
- Developing and recommending harmonized guidelines for data gathering to enhanced comparability within and across (bio)monitoring programmes on chemicals and waste and compiling existing datasets to assess trends, as well as provide general analysis and conclusions on these datasets.
- The panel shall decide on the institutions/actors that can make proposals or requests for reports or any other products on scientific and technical matters relating to chemicals, waste and pollution subject to the availability of funds and authors, and the expectation that the results of the work will be of use to combat the triple planetary crisis. Possible institutions/actors could be relevant UN Organizations (e.g UNEP, WHO, ILO) or Bodies and assessment processes associated with the UN and others. This should be considered at a later stage.
- On the condition that the report or other product will not interfere with work done by a body under the respective Convention and will be formally discussed by that Convention, as this makes it more likely that knowledge and insights will be used, the panel may also consider requests from relevant MEAs on chemicals, waste or pollution (in its broadest sense but at least including air pollution MEAs).
- Strengthening the perception of the broader public of the panel's scope of activities (especially outside the environment sector).
- With regards to the function of the panel to disseminate key scientific findings of its reports or other products for different audiences of its reports, the panel may request the secretariat to provide outreach and raise awareness of its output to relevant MEAs, and governing bodies. In the future, new MEAs might become relevant, notably in view

of the ongoing negotiations of an international legally binding instrument to end plastics pollution (UNEA resolution 5/14).

- The panel should consider addressing research and development activities on sustainable chemistry solutions as well as to continuously improve scientific standards.
- Pursuing a forward-looking approach by promoting innovation with the aim of providing sustainable solutions to societal needs.

2. Please provide any relevant comments on the needs you have listed above:

- The panel should strengthen the scientific basis of policies related to chemicals and waste management and contribute to more effective and sustainable approaches to preventing pollution and protecting human health and the environment. The panel should provide scientific expertise and policy relevant information on the identification, assessment, and management of hazardous chemicals and waste, as well as on the development of strategies to prevent pollution. It can also help policymakers identify and prioritize areas for research and development and facilitate the translation of scientific findings into policy recommendations. This can help ensure that policies related to chemicals and waste management are based on sound science and take into account the diverse perspectives and interests of stakeholders.
- Criteria to decide on work by the panel and to prioritize the topics of assessment reports should be based on a set of transparent and objective criteria. Among the criteria, urgency of action, geographical scope and available scientific resources are key. Criteria should also include the availability of funding for the proposed requested or suggested work, the availability of scientists and experts as authors, and the expectations for the usefulness of the outcomes of the work to combat the triple planetary crises.
- 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 as set out in the resolution 5/8, allowing it to reflect the diversity and complexity of chemicals, waste and pollution issues and different needs of different stakeholders/countries/contexts. To respond to evolving challenges and needs in a timely manner, we see merits in the IPBES approach of a rolling working programme. The list of needs that the panel decide to fulfill would make up the Program of Work, that would evolve over time as work is finished and new needs are catered.
- Alternatives for chemicals and other solutions to prevent waste and pollution should be carefully revised in light of the triple planetary crisis. Their impact on climate change and biodiversity should always be considered. In that respect, cooperation, as appropriate, with other science-policy bodies, such as the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) could be relevant to maximize the opportunities to seek synergetic solutions and strategies to tackle the triple planetary crisis.
- As the global chemicals production and use is increasing, and at the same time, several million tons of chemicals enter the environment every year, we do see a need for promoting innovation in the sense of sustainable chemistry. For many chemicals and substances with hazardous properties we already have enough findings to take action, without the need to re-assess.
- It should be ensured that the work of the future Panel is transparent and impartial, that it can produce reports and assessments that are credible and scientifically robust and avoid potential conflict of interests and safeguard commercially sensitive information.

- The reports of the future panel should be based on a diverse array of knowledge sources, including standard scientific literature and grey literature, they should also integrate different scientific disciplines and point of views, including natural and biomedical sciences, social sciences, humanities, traditional and local indigenous knowledge. Reports should be open to inclusive participation, including indigenous people.
- Reports should include up-to-date and relevant information on the interlinkages between chemicals, waste, pollution and other areas such as climate, biodiversity and health (including pandemic) issues.
- Valuable deliverables could be in the form of reports in the same line as the UN report on Issues of Concern (<https://wedocs.unep.org/handle/20.500.11822/33809>); compilations of biomonitoring studies (like the HBM4EU) with general conclusions and recommendations; projects like the forever pollution project on PFAS (<https://foreverpollution.eu/>) on a more global scale.

3. 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):

Questions is not a concept that occurs in UNEA 5/8. It is therefore prone to differences in definition or interpretation and may lead to input that will be difficult to combine. Clarification would be needed on the meaning of this term. We have interpreted **questions** as the types of products proposed, requested or suggested to the panel by members of the panel, other processes, institutions, conventions or stakeholders for any kind of work that fits within the scope and principal functions of the panel. However, "Questions" can also be understood as a detailed aspect of what issues should be addressed in each report. In this case, decisions on the questions to be addressed should be better left to the Panel itself once constituted.

Against this background, we have the following preliminary suggestions:

- The panel should address questions and needs from policymakers and analyze evidence-based options for policy action. The panel may provide knowledge that is relevant to all phases of the policy life-cycle (policy formation, policy adoption, policy implementation, policy implementation evaluation, and policy maintenance).
- The panel shall handle matters which concerns chemicals, waste and pollution. In particular, it shall assess environmental and human health issues associated with chemicals and waste.
- The panel should compile detailed scientific reports on the sources, trade, distribution, exposure and toxicity to humans, animals and ecosystems of specific chemicals, including combination effects, waste streams or other issues.
- The panel should contribute to reducing scientific uncertainty and to reaching scientific consensus while being pragmatic to ensure timely policy action. It should envision a dialogue between scientist and policymakers, and with industry, in response to existing or potential chemical and waste contamination and pollution, given that the industrial sector has much practical information that would strengthen the relevance of the question addressed. In that sense the panel should ensure there is a common understanding of terminology used, in terms of prevention of pollution and sound management of waste.
- The panel should complement IPCC, IPBES and IRP, so that together these assessment processes provide the knowledge that is necessary to successfully combat the triple planetary crisis.

- In IPCC, Technical Support Units provide scientific, technical and organisational support, and bring a broad range of policy, operational and communication expertise to help the author teams in the preparation and production of products. TSUs also organize training for prospective authors to support their capacity to execute assessments. The panel could have a technical support unit(s) with similar functions.
- We may furthermore consider the need for a policy to fast-track specific reports or requests.
- Based on the functions of the Panel, the output the panel may provide includes, among others:
 - horizon scans that identify probable future developments in driving forces, pressures and state, in substitutes, alternatives, technological emission reduction measures and policy approaches,
 - comprehensive assessments that address the main elements of its scope special reports on emerging issues.
 - regional reports that are of special interest to groups of SPP-members,
 - methodology reports that propose harmonized procedures for monitoring, data collection, data reporting, data management, data access, data quality control, models and meta-data on models, scenarios and meta-data on scenarios.
- Questions to be handled by the future Panel should be agreed by the members of the future Panel taking into account the requests made by member states and relevant stakeholders. The following list is a none-exhaustive list of timely questions we envision the Panel might handle:
 - Q1: Which issues are posing an emerging risk to human health and the environment? In particular, identification of emerging chemical issues via horizon scanning.
 - Q2: Which major uncertainties remain regarding assessment of risk?
 - Q3: What are hotspots of pollution and exposure and what are the options to address them?
 - Q4: What are relevant links with other challenges like biodiversity loss and climate change?
 - Q5: How could the panel include information on the need for and the promotion of innovation and sustainable chemistry?

4. Please provide any relevant comments on the questions you have listed above:

- The questions the panel may handle should cover the full scope as characterized in resolution UNEA 5/8, as this both improves transparency (3 assessment processes, each covering its own planetary crisis), and helps the efficient allocation (creating more panels on narrower topics would lead to dilution of expertise, funds and governance, which in turn would lead to less robust products, less commitment, and more obstacles for integration). The scope of the panel shall be broad with flexibility for the future.
- The panel should address questions from policymakers in order to inform policy priorities and support the development of sound evidence-based policy action.
- Questions should be submitted in standardized procedures and set time frame unless in specific unforeseen emergency situations.

- A set of objective criteria needs to be put forward on the prioritization of the questions to be handled.
- Relevant comments related to the non-exhaustive list of questions we put forward above:
 - On Q1, e.g: listing of chemicals that pose emerging risks based on (projected) tonnages produced or extracted, (potential) hazards and risks, etc.
 - On Q2, e.g: identifying gaps in material cycling (i.e., tonnages produced vs tonnages reused, recycled, emitted, etc.).
 - On Q3, e.g: actions like identifying major exposure routes (i.e., water, soil, air, food, etc)
 - On Q4, e.g: assessments like how increase in green technology might impact biodiversity.