

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?

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Who are you submitting on behalf of?

International Labour Organization (ILO)

Are you a national focal point?

No

What is your country?

Switzerland

What is your title?

Technical Specialist on Occupational Safety and Health/Chemical industry specialist

What is your gender?

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What is your email address?

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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 the last 100 years, the International Labour Organization (ILO) has adopted more than 40 legal instruments relevant to the sound management of chemicals and waste. These instruments encompass fundamental occupational safety and health Conventions, namely [the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 \(No. 155\)](#) and the [Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 \(No. 187\)](#). Additionally, they encompass the [Chemicals Convention, 1990 \(No. 170\)](#), the [Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention, 1993 \(No. 174\)](#), the [Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, 1981 \(No. 164\)](#), the [Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Recommendation, \(No. 197\)](#), the [Chemical Recommendation, 1990 \(No. 177\)](#), and the [Prevention of Major Industrial Accident Recommendation, 1993 \(No. 181\)](#).

Notably, Convention No. 155 and its accompanying Recommendation No. 164 emphasize the vital role of science in safeguarding the safety and health of workers. Specifically, Article 12 of Convention No. 155 states that “those who design, manufacture, import, provide or transfer machinery, equipment or substances for occupational use—(c) undertake studies and research or otherwise keep abreast of the scientific and technical knowledge necessary to comply with subparagraphs (a) and (b) of this Article.” Part III of Recommendation No. 164 includes provision 4: “..the competent authority or authorities in each country should – (b) from time-to-time review legislative enactments concerning occupational safety and health and the working environment, and provisions issued or approved in pursuance of clause (a) of this Paragraph, in the light of experience and advances in science and technology;”

Based on the mandate and mission of the ILO, there are key action areas that can be undertaken by the SPP, from a science-policy perspective:

1. The impact of chemical use and exposures on occupational safety and health
1. The interlinkages between chemical use and exposures on climate change and the just transition
2. The interlinkages between chemical use and exposures on broader indicators of decent work

The ILO is presently in the process of updating the proposals and roadmap for the review of the [Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health](#), which was adopted during the 91st Session (2003) of the International Labour Conference (ILC). This effort includes the elevation of a safe and healthy working environment as a new foundational principle and right at work. The sound management of hazardous chemicals and waste is essential to achieve a safe and healthy working environment and is key for any comprehensive workplace occupational safety and health strategy. The Governing Body of the ILO is scheduled to discuss and adopt the Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health for the period 2024–2030, along with its implementation plan, at the forthcoming 349th Session of the Governing Body from 30 October to 9 November 2023. The preliminary direction of the ILO, which builds upon the current Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health, has identified several key action areas that the proposed science-policy panel may address, as outlined below:

1. Knowledge development and dissemination: Concerned with occupational safety and health research, and the production, analysis and dissemination of data, knowledge and experiences concerned with occupational safety and health.
2. Promotion, awareness raising and advocacy: Focuses on the promotion of a preventative safety and health culture through global campaigns and events and activities related to global advocacy, awareness raising and the promotion of occupational safety and health initiatives.
3. Technical assistance and support to ILO constituents: Looks at the technical and policy assistance provided by the ILO to its Members, to support the ratification and implementation of international labour standards on occupational safety and health, as well as implementation of specific codes of practice and guidelines.
4. Multilateral cooperation: Includes efforts to improve cooperation between all bodies concerned with occupational safety and health.

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

The science-policy panel could advance the principles of decent work, which encompasses four core pillars: ensuring equal opportunities for both men and women in productive and fairly compensated employment, upholding labor rights, extending social protection, and fostering social dialogue. The science-policy panel should play a crucial role in supporting the Employer and Business Membership Organizations (EBMOs) in their efforts to foster sustainable enterprise development to generate productive employment opportunities and enhance living standards, and protect all workers from both fatal and non-fatal diseases and injuries related to their employment while emphasizing the principle of prevention. It encompasses the importance of a safe and healthy work environment, aligning with the ILO's mandate to social justice and a human-centred approach. The inclusion of hazardous substance coverage aims to safeguard workers from potential harm, adhering to precise definitions provided by relevant ILO Conventions. This integrated approach underscores the need to ensure the well-being and safety and health at work of all workers, promote sustainable economies, and address challenges through effective social dialogue and compliance with international labour standards.

The ILO reiterates that its preference, as mentioned in point 1, is in line with the Resolution adopted by the United Nations Environment Assembly on March 2, 2022 (Resolution 5/8). The proposed science-policy panel is envisioned to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste, as well as pollution prevention. The Resolution acknowledges that enhancing the availability of scientific information and assessment can address capacity limitations, enable more efficient actions to mitigate and prevent the adverse consequences of improper management of chemicals and waste, and promote human well-being and overall prosperity. This particularly applies to points (b) and (c).

The Resolution additionally outlines the following functions for the panel:

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2. Considers that the principal functions of the panel should include, among other things:
 - (a) Undertaking “horizon scanning” to identify issues of relevance to policymakers and, where possible, proposing evidence-based options to address them;
 - (b) Conducting assessments of current issues and identifying potential evidence-based options to address, where possible, those issues, in particular those relevant to developing countries;
 - (c) Providing up-to-date and relevant information, identifying key gaps in scientific research, encouraging and supporting communication between scientists and policymakers, explaining and disseminating findings for different audiences, and raising public awareness;
 - (d) Facilitating information-sharing with countries, in particular developing countries seeking relevant scientific information;

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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):

Please be advised that the ranking provided below is currently provisional. Detailed descriptions are provided in Point 4.

1. Definition of chemicals: What is the definition of a chemical and how broad is the scope of this definition?
2. Exposure limit and monitoring: How should standardized occupational exposure limits for chemicals be determined and updated? How should workplace exposure monitoring be carried out and unsafe exposures reported?
3. Classification system: Can a comprehensive and harmonized chemical classification system be developed that encompasses all chemical forms/mixtures, by-products, additives and related entities? What would be the methodology for developing such a system?

4. Uniform criteria for chemical data sheets: How can internationally standardized criteria for crafting chemical safety data sheets be established to facilitate consistent formats and content?
5. Responsibility of manufacturers and suppliers: In the context of international trade and the exporting of chemicals, what are the responsibilities of chemical suppliers and what are the responsibilities of governments?
6. Gender-based exposure and health outcome issues: What are the major gender-based exposure and health outcome issues from chemicals impacting workers globally and how should evidence in this area be collated and disseminated?
7. Evidence regarding new or emerging chemicals: How should information and data regarding new and emerging hazardous chemicals be collected and distributed in a timely manner, and who should be responsible for this?

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

The effective management of chemicals and waste necessitates standardized guidance on pivotal facets of chemical safety to prevent potential disparities, uncertainties and complications during its implementation across Member States and employers' and workers' organizations.

1. Definition of chemicals: What is the definition of a chemical and how broad is the scope of this definition?

The definition of chemicals varies across different jurisdictions. It would be beneficial for Member States and employers' and workers' organizations to establish a standardized and current definition of chemicals.

2. Exposure limit and monitoring: How should standardized occupational exposure limits for chemicals be determined and updated? How should workplace exposure monitoring be carried out and unsafe exposures reported?

It would be highly advantageous for Member States and employers and workers' organizations if the science-policy panel could establish an international standard for determining and updating such limits, thereby ensuring that all Member States and employers' and workers' organizations benefit from clear and consistent guidance. The lack of an international standard for exposure limits could result in inconsistent strategies for safeguarding workers from hazardous chemicals and waste. In addition, the science-policy panel could delineate comprehensive provisions for monitoring worker exposure, encompassing aspects such as frequency, methodologies and reporting protocols. This would help minimize potential variations in monitoring practices.

3. Classification system: Can a comprehensive and harmonized chemical classification system be developed that encompasses all chemical forms/mixtures, by-products, additives and related entities? What would be the methodology for developing such a system?

Clear guidance on comprehensively evaluating chemical mixtures would greatly aid Member States and employers' and workers' organizations in achieving internationally uniform assessments. Although international standards exist, certain products utilizing chemicals, such as plastics, are yet to be categorized under a harmonized classification system. Hence, it is imperative to develop a comprehensive and harmonized classification system that encompasses all chemical forms, by-products, additives and related entities.

4. Uniform criteria for chemical data sheets: How can internationally standardized criteria for crafting chemical safety data sheets be established to facilitate consistent formats and content?

The establishment of internationally standardized criteria for crafting chemical safety data sheets would facilitate consistent formats and content. Such uniformity would enhance the ease of comprehension and utilization of this information by employers and workers alike. Detailed guidelines for the specific criteria used to classify chemicals should be formulated to ensure consistent classification practices across the Member States.

5. Responsibility of manufacturers and suppliers: In the context of international trade and the exporting of chemicals, what are the responsibilities of chemical suppliers and what are the responsibilities of governments?

To obviate potential divergent interpretations and accountability gaps in the management of chemicals and waste, the responsibilities of chemical suppliers should be clearly defined within the context of international trade. The science-policy panel could play a pivotal role in clarifying and harmonizing these responsibilities, increasing clarity and transparency.

6. Gender-based exposure and health outcome issues: What are the major gender-based exposure and health outcome issues from chemicals impacting workers globally and how should evidence in this area be collated and disseminated?

The ILO is concerned with addressing gender-based issues related to chemical and waste exposures in the workplace. To inform policy making and better tackle exposure and health outcome issues related to gender, it would be useful for the science-policy panel to expand the evidence base for gender-specific chemical concerns.

1. Evidence regarding new or emerging chemicals: How should information and data regarding new and emerging hazardous chemicals be collected and distributed in a timely manner, and who should be responsible for this?

In order for the ILO to better inform Member States and employers' and workers' organizations about potential new chemical and waste risks in their regions and sectors, the science-policy panel could establish an evidence base concerned with collating information about any pertinent new hazards, such as nanomaterials and endocrine-disrupting chemicals.