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Ad hoc open-ended working group on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution
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Item 4 of the provisional agenda*

Preparation of proposals for the establishment of a science-policy panel

Summary and analysis of submissions received on needs and questions the panel may handle

Note by the secretariat

The annex to the present note contains a summary and analysis of submissions received on needs and questions the science-policy panel may handle. The ad hoc open-ended working group on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution may wish to consider the information provided.

* UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/1.

Annex*

Summary and analysis of submissions received on needs and questions the panel may handle

I. Introduction

1. At its resumed fifth session, held in Nairobi from 28 February to 2 March 2022, the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) decided, by its resolution 5/8, to establish a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution, with details to be further specified pursuant to the resolution.

2. By the same resolution, the Environment Assembly decided to convene an ad hoc open-ended working group (OEWG) that would prepare proposals for the science-policy panel to consider a number of issues, including the name and scope of the panel (para. 5(b)).

3. At the second part of the first session of the ad hoc open-ended working group, held in Bangkok from 30 January to 3 February 2023, the contact group on organization of work of the OEWG identified "Member States and stakeholder input on needs and questions the Panel may handle" as one of the elements to inform the preparation for proposals for establishing a science-policy panel, notably regarding the panel's scope (UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/3). The OEWG Bureau subsequently asked the secretariat to solicit submissions on needs and questions the panel may handle.

4. The call for submissions was issued on 10 August 2023, with an initial deadline of 5 September 2023.

5. The 21 submissions from Member States and observers,[1] and 23 submissions from stakeholders,[2] received by the secretariat have been made available on the OEWG website: https://www.unep.org/oewg-spp-chemicals-waste-pollution/needs-questions-panel-may-handle.

6. This document provides a summary and analysis of the submissions received, and is structured in four parts. Part II contains an overarching summary and analysis; Part III, a summary and analysis of issues more salient in Member States' and observers' submissions; Part IV, a summary and analysis of issues more salient in stakeholders' submissions; and Part V, the conclusion. Note that while Parts III and IV differentiate among submissions received from Member States and stakeholders respectively, they are not intended to imply that no stakeholder submissions addressed issues discussed in Part III, nor that no Member State submissions addressed issues discussed in Part IV. The ad hoc open-ended working group is encouraged to read each individual submission.

II. Overarching summary and analysis

7. This section provides a summary and analysis of common themes in the submissions.

8. The form for submissions included four questions:

* The annex has not been formally edited.

[1] submissions were received from the following: Argentina; Australia; Bosnia and Herzegovina; Brazil; Canada; Comoros; Congo; European Union and its Member States; Japan; Kingdom of Bahrain; Peru; Qatar; Rwanda; Saudi Arabia; Serbia; Sri Lanka; Syrian Arab Republic; Tanzania; United Kingdom; United States of America; and Yemen.

[2] submissions were received from the following: CARPIN; China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation (CBCGDF); Conflict and Environment Observatory (CEOBS); Center for Public Health and Environmental Development (CHEPHED); Center for International Environmental Law (CIEL); Comparatively for Tanzania Elites Community Organizers (CTECO); Children and Youth Major Group (CYMG); Greenpeace; International Council of Chemical Associations (ICCA); International Labour Organization (ILO); Association Institute of Total Environment (INTEV); International Panel on Chemical Pollution (IPCP); The International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN); Institute For Sustainable Development and Research (ISDR); Norwegian Research Centre (NORCE); Norwegian Institute for Air Research; Royal Society of Chemistry (RSC); Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC); Spanish Council for Scientific Research; UN Environment Programme (UNEP); Universal Versatile Society (UV Society); Welfare Togo; and World Health Organisation (WHO).

(i) 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):

(ii) Please provide any relevant comments on the needs you have listed above:

(iii) 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):

(iv) Please provide any relevant comments on the questions you have listed above:

9. The overarching summary and analysis is structured in five parts: A) divergences on understanding of “needs” and “questions”; B) issues that the panel may handle; C) capacity building; D) awareness-raising needs; E) the range of other processes highlighted as relevant, including for coordination and cooperation.

A. Divergence on understanding of “needs” and “questions”

10. There is a great deal of variation in how "needs the panel may handle" and "questions the panel may handle" are interpreted in the submissions:

(i) what some include under needs, others include under questions, and few submissions ranked their responses;

(ii) several submissions structure their response according to the functions agreed at OEWG 1.2 for the science-policy panel;

(iii) some submissions note it is too soon to collect specific needs and questions the panel may handle;

(iv) recalling UNEA resolution 5/8, some submissions point to ensuring the needs and questions to be addressed by the panel be aligned with the most urgent needs and questions faced by developing countries;

(v) some submissions identify needs faced in the sound management of chemicals and waste and the prevention of pollution in a general sense and the link to aspects of the needs and questions the panel may handle is less explicit;

(vi) a few submissions call attention to specific needs faced under other ongoing processes, such as the Minamata Convention on Mercury;

(vii) some use their submission to draw attention to documents that will be needed to support the work of the panel, for example the prioritization framework for setting the work programme.

B. Issues that the panel may handle

11. A wide array of issues are put forward in submissions, whether as needs or questions. The issues include some overarching concepts (e.g. decent work) as well as some more narrowly defined issues (e.g. the loss of flying insects in developed countries). They also include needs related to the design of the panel (e.g. means of achieving multidisciplinarity) and needs for specific types of knowledge (e.g. barriers and gaps that could be addressed to enable implementation). Among these issues, many submissions also underscore the importance of core principles for the panel, such as credibility, relevance and legitimacy.

12. The issues that the panel may handle are compiled and presented below in four separate tables:

(i) Table 1 presents a compilation of overarching concepts included in submissions;

(ii) Table 2 presents a compilation of more narrowly defined issues, sorted according to the three main categories of chemicals, waste, and pollution prevention and with a fourth column for cross-cutting issues;

(iii) Table 3 presents a compilation of issues related to panel design included in submissions;

(iv) Table 4 presents a compilation of issues related to needs for specific types of knowledge included in submissions.

Table 1: Compilation of overarching concepts included in submissions

Compilation of overarching concepts included in submissions *(listed alphabetically)*
Circular economy
Decent work
DPSIR framework (drivers, pressures, state, impact, and response model of intervention)
Early warning
Environmental justice
Extended producer responsibility
Free access to science and information
Gender responsiveness
Green/low-carbon economy
Intergenerational equity
Just transition
Planetary boundaries
Polluter pays principle
Precautionary principle
Regulating chemical by chemical or by class of chemicals or by sector
Rights of green consumption
Risk assessment, including assessment of socio-economic impacts
Risk management
Sustainable chemistry
True Cost Accounting (TCA)

Table 2: Compilation of defined issues included in submissions

Compilation of defined issues included in submissions *(listed alphabetically under each column)*			
Chemicals	**Waste**	**Pollution prevention**	**Cross-cutting**
Carcinogenic, Mutagenic, Reprotoxic substances	Assessment of capacity for destruction of specific waste, such as Persistent Organic Pollutant (POP) waste	Exposure levels	Agriculture sector
Chemical definitions		Identify & control pollutants related to climate change	Antimicrobial resistance
Chemicals in Products		Identify hotspots of pollution and exposure	Assessing risk of microplastics on human health, especially children and youth
Chemicals or group of chemicals of major public health concern (eg. asbestos, lead, cadmium)	Environmentally-sound final disposal facilities	Introduce new principles to control pollution	Biodiversity loss
Endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs)	Food loss and waste	Loss of biodiversity and human health effects from increasing pesticide use	Capacity building needs
Gender-specific chemical concerns	Identify opportunities for waste reduction	Loss of flying insects in developed countries	Climate change
Hazardous substances withing the life cycle of electrical and electronic products (HSLEEP)	Informal waste economy	Marine and coastal pollution	Fertilizers
	Municipal waste management	Microplastics	Healthcare sector
			Industrialization
			Industry sector
			Nanotechnology and manufactured nanomaterials
			Nuclear energy

Highly hazardous pesticides (HHP) Neurotoxicants Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFASs) Persistent, Bioaccumulative, Toxic (PBT) substances Persistent, Mobile and Toxic (PMT) substances Pesticides Respiratory or skin sensitizing substances Risk management of pharmaceuticals for human health	Transfer of waste from rich to poor countries	Military and conflict-related pollution Nuclear releases Pollution released to air, water, soil, and the oceans Synthetic rubber pollution Toxic impacts of solutions, including of climate solutions Treatment of urban and industrial waters discharged into the sea	Plastics Protection of the environment in the context of armed conflict Regulating emissions of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients Regulatory gaps Scientific research on superconductor Sustainable development Trade, including illegal trade Urbanization

Table 3: Compilation of issues related to panel design included in submissions

Compilation of issues related to panel design included in submissions *(listed alphabetically)*
Conceptual framework
Conflict of interest management
Means of monitoring the panel
Multidisciplinarity
Policies for engaging multidisciplinary stakeholders in the panel
Policy for safeguarding commercially sensitive information whilst not restricting data sharing
Prioritization framework
Promoting innovation (including of new clean alternatives)
Promoting partnerships between academia and industry Structured information gathering by the Panel to better understand needs and opportunities and inform the development of an impactful work plan
Quality assurance

Table 4: Compilation of issues related to needs for specific types of knowledge included in submissions

Compilation of issues related to needs for specific types of knowledge included in submissions *(listed alphabetically)*
Addressing cross-cutting issues across silos and sectors
Addressing the triple planetary threats holistically
Addressing why some interventions have not been more widely taken up by countries
Assessing costs of inaction
Avoiding regrettable substitutions
Barriers and gaps that could be addressed to enable implementation

Collating information about any pertinent new hazards
Complex interplay between three areas of triple planetary crisis
Criteria for identify problematic and avoidable plastics
Data processing
Develop a comprehensive and harmonized classification system that encompasses all chemical forms, by-products, additives and related entities.
Develop a comprehensive system for obtaining up-to-date and reliable chemicals and waste data
Develop and recommend harmonized guidelines for data gathering to enhanced comparability within and across (bio)monitoring programmes
Effectiveness of policy interventions
Establishing a repository of case studies and promoting best practices
Establishing an international standard for determining and updating exposure limits
Establishing a standardized and current definition of chemicals
Establishing internationally standardized criteria for crafting chemical safety data sheets
Following a source-pathway-receptor model to identify greatest risks and impacts
Fostering policy support for effective and sustainable interventions
Improvements of adequate testing facilities for identifying and classifying chemicals
Options available to mitigate the socio-economic impacts, including cross-border impacts, resulting from policy interventions
Provide knowledge that is relevant to all phases of the policy life-cycle
Role of financial and technical assistance for developing countries
Scientific information on the best methods and practices associated with pollution source apportionment studies
Scientific support to determine which chemicals and waste are the greatest priority for improved management
Supporting implementation of MEAs in fragile and conflict-affected states

C. Capacity building

13. Capacity building is discussed in two-thirds of submissions from Member States and observers, and over a third of submissions overall.[3] References to capacity building vary in their scope and detail. The range of needs and questions included under capacity building in general align with the two text proposals[4] describing the capacity building function that OEWG 1.2 agreed would be the starting point for continuing discussions on the issue.

14. References to capacity refer to building skills in both technical and regulatory arenas. Some submissions emphasize the importance of training: for workers in the chemicals industry, for regulators, and for scientists. Other submissions emphasize technological transfer and access to resources, including for building data gathering, analytical, testing, modelling and monitoring (including bio-monitoring) capabilities. For example, when discussing the need to research and control pollutants related to climate change, one Member State submission notes: “To make meaningful

[3] Capacity building was addressed in 14 Member State and observer submissions and in 7 stakeholder submissions.

[4] One text is proposed by the African Group and the Group of Latin American and Caribbean States “Provide capacity-building through all the functions of the panel and facilitate technology transfer, in particular to developing countries, to improve the science-policy interface at appropriate levels, including activities to ensure effective, geographically balanced and gender-responsive participation of scientists in the assessments of the panel, strengthen data generation capacity, enhance knowledge and skills that will support country infrastructure and human capacity, and facilitate connection and matchmaking of capacity-related needs and potential solutions”; the other text is proposed by the European Union: “Build capacity to support the functions and work of the panel in order to strengthen the science-policy interface for sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution”.

progress, it will require financial resources for data collection, laboratory analysis, modeling tools, and monitoring equipment."

15. Several submissions underscore the need to meet capacity-building needs of developing countries in particular, with some emphasizing the need for financial resources and one noting difficulty in accessing scientific information (especially on emerging issues). A few submissions raise concerns about rising financial burdens on developing countries.

D. Awareness-raising

16. The need for awareness raising is included in over a third of submissions.[5] Most of these submissions point to "raising public awareness" of chemicals, waste and pollution-related issues among the general public, in line with the formulation of the related function[6] in UNEA resolution 5/8.

17. Some of these submissions point to specific constituencies to be targets of awareness raising, such as policymakers, businesses, and scientists, but also multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs). For scientists, submissions varyingly point to the need to raise awareness in order to 1) encourage them to enter certain training pipelines, 2) encourage them to conduct research in line with policy needs, 3) know how they can contribute to the work of the panel and 4) ensure their home institutions reward participation in the work of the panel. Other submissions point to raising awareness on specific issues, including on: "occupational health and safety initiatives", "emerging issues", "source awareness" and "benefits of sustainable chemical management".

E. Other relevant processes

18. UNEA resolution 5/8 provides for proposals to be prepared "while respecting the mandates of relevant multilateral agreements and other international instruments and intergovernmental bodies, avoiding overlap and duplication of work, and promoting coordination and cooperation" (paragraph 5(c)).

19. Many submissions point to other processes or fora. In some cases, these references are used to highlight particular needs within those processes, in others to underscore the need for aligning and coordinating work. References to other processes also are used to specify opportunities for the panel to fill a particular need. For example, one stakeholder submission refers to the Global Chemicals Outlook II: From Legacies to Innovative Solutions as follows: "The intergovernmental nature of the panel is the crucial "value added" to past activities, such as compiling the Global Chemicals Outlook. The latter has been extremely valuable, but does not allow the global community to prioritize issues and to debate potential solutions."

20. References are made to processes that are completed (such as to the Global Chemicals Outlook II), existing, or yet to be finalized. The most frequent references to current processes were references to:

(i) the development of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, and

(ii) the outcome of the Fifth Meeting of the International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM 5) concluded in September 2023 (an outcome now known as the Global Framework on Chemicals[7] – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste.

21. The compilation in Table 5 highlights the breadth of processes, fora and outputs that submissions identified as relevant to the needs and questions the panel may handle.

[5] Raising awareness was included in 11 Member State and observer submissions and in 7 stakeholder submissions.

[6] Paragraph 2 of UNEA resolution 5/8 includes, as a principal function: "(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"

[7] this is referred to as the "SAICM Beyond 2020 instrument" in several submissions due to the timing of the call for submissions

Table 5: Compilation of other processes, fora or outputs referred to in submissions

Other processes, fora or outputs referred to in submissions *(listed alphabetically)*
Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions
Compendium of WHO and other UN guidance on health and environment
Global Chemicals Outlook II: From Legacies to Innovative Solutions, mandated by UNEA in 2016 and launched by UNEP in 2019
Global Environment Facility (GEF)
Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste
Human rights and human rights council
ILO Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health
Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment
Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC)
Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES)
International Law Commission's legal principles on the Protection of the Environment in relation to Armed Conflict (PERAC)
Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC)
International Panel on Chemical Pollution 2018 Multi-Stakeholder Workshop on Strengthening the Science-Policy Interface in International Chemicals Governance
International Resource Panel (IRP)
Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, including Target 7 "Pollution reduced, halving nutrient loss and pesticide risk"
Minamata Convention on Mercury
Multilateral Environmental Agreements (in general)
One Health approach (under quadripartite agreement)
Political declaration on the use of Explosive Weapons in Populated Areas (EWIPA)
Principles for Assisting Victims of the Toxic Remnants of War on how assistance programmes for conflict-affected communities should be designed and implemented.
Sustainable Development Goals
UN Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNEA Resolution 3/1 Pollution mitigation and control in areas affected by armed conflict or terrorism
UNEA resolution 5/7 on the sound management of chemicals and waste, and notably the consultation process on issues of concern, building on the 2020 Assessment Report on Issues of Concern: Chemicals and Waste Issues Posing Risks to Human Health and the Environment and the 2019 Global Chemicals Outlook II
UNEP's current medium-term strategy states that work on conflicts will be mainstreamed across its core focus areas, including action on chemicals and pollution.
WHO Chemical Risk Assessment Network
WHO Global Chemicals and Health Network
WHO Quality Assurance Team

III. Summary and analysis of issues more salient in Member States' and observers' submissions

22. When looking specifically to submissions from Member States and observers, there are three key areas of emphasis: A) coordination with MEAs; B) identifying best practices; C) addressing the needs of developing countries.

A. Coordination with MEAs

23. Several submissions point to the potential for the panel to coordinate its work with MEAs. The suggestions generally fall into three broad categories:

24. opportunities for the panel to respond directly to requests from the Conference of the Parties (COP) of a relevant MEA;

(i) opportunities for the panel to address issues not included in the scope of existing MEAs, in some cases referring to MEAs in a general sense, in other cases referring to specific MEAs (see Table 5 above for full list);

(ii) opportunities for the panel to address, in a more synergistic way, issues currently being addressed by more than one MEA.

B. Identifying best practices

25. Several submissions suggest identifying best practices for the sound management of chemicals and waste and the prevention of pollution. Others underscore the importance of identifying several options for countries to choose from. Some submissions point to the importance of tailoring best practices to the context and realities of country circumstances, for example developing countries, low and middle income countries, or countries affected by conflict.

26. When discussing identifying best practices, the emphasis is generally in two distinct areas: the first relating to specific testing, control, data management or destruction technologies; and the second relating to specific policy tools and incentives. Several submissions also suggest identifying incentives for encouraging expert participation in the work of the panel.

27. Some submissions point to specific areas of best practice, with some variation as to their application. For example, several submissions underscore the need for the panel to rely on consensus. Two of the submissions from Member States contextualize consensus with the need for timely action, for example one submission notes the need for "developing scientific consensus on certain issues, while ensuring that the work toward consensus does not preclude timely action on chemicals issues".

C. Addressing needs of developing countries

28. Many submissions point to the importance of the panel addressing the needs of developing countries; there is variation as to how those needs are characterized. One submission points to the need to ensure that any guides or toolkits are usable in a developing country context. Another points to the importance of multi-sectoral engagement; yet another to the need for engagement of experts from developing countries. This theme is closely connected to submissions on capacity building, with submissions pointing to, as noted above, needs for testing facilities and resources for data analysis among others.

IV. Summary and analysis of issues more salient in stakeholders' submissions

29. When looking specifically to submissions from stakeholders there are three key areas of emphasis: A) inclusivity; B) integrity; and C) targeting, and connecting, varied scales.

A. Inclusivity

30. A number of submissions from stakeholders stress inclusivity, notably relating to who participates in the work of the panel and those with and from whom to engage with in knowledge sharing.

31. Some submissions highlight specific types of inclusivity, including having youth engagement, being gender-inclusive and gender-responsive, and being inclusive of:

(i) all kinds of knowledge including local and indigenous knowledge;

(ii) all relevant disciplines, including natural and social sciences;

(iii) knowledge of stakeholders across the chemicals and waste value-chain and across sectors, including those in the informal economy and those stakeholders most vulnerable to pollution;

(iv) knowledge of states undergoing conflict or facing disasters.

32. These submissions sometimes echo earlier submissions on operating principles for the panel (see UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/3 and UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.2/INF/2), with some making specific reference to a specific submission (these submissions on operating principles are all available at: https://www.unep.org/oewg-spp-chemicals-waste-pollution/operating-principles)

B. Integrity

33. Some submissions point to the need for conflict-of-interest management as a means of ensuring the panel's integrity, in some cases explicitly connecting this item to the need for inclusivity.

34. One submission lists, among needs the panel may handle, "The panel needs to be first and foremost a scientifically led initiative meaning (i) expert participation is important and incentivized, (ii) conflicts of interests are minimized, and (iii) lobbyist activity at panel meetings are prevented." Another notes "The panel needs to be inclusive/balanced…. This includes experts independent of their affiliation, chosen based on scientific rigor and proven expertise in the field. … It is vital that the aforementioned comprehensive approach does not exclude industry expertise, given the multitude of scientific information and knowledge industry has about chemicals, waste and pollution."

C. Targeting, and connecting, varied scales

35. Some submissions point to the importance, and value, of understanding problems, and solutions, in their local context. This extends, in some cases, to highlighting the need for local, national, regional and sub-regional data as well as for the need to link regional and sub-regional initiatives.

V. Conclusion

36. The brief summaries and analyses above aim to provide an accessible snapshot of the 44 submissions received.

37. The submissions also evidence a few areas where potentially contrasting priorities are being put forward in different submissions. For example, some submissions highlight the potential for the panel to operate at the leading edge of knowledge co-production and others highlight the potential for the panel to contribute to more successful implementation by better deploying well-established knowledge.

38. In addition to the rich insights provided by a close reading of each of the submissions received, the submissions as a whole point to the breadth of complex, and sometimes interrelated, issues the panel is envisioned as having the potential to handle. These include issues encompassing all different aspects and forms of pollution. This array of submissions may inform the ad hoc open-ended working group's continued discussion on scope.