

Switzerland's written comments on the working documents for OEWG3 on a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution

Switzerland welcomes the working documents presented by the Secretariat, including the draft texts for the 4 annexes. They are a good basis to complete the negotiations on the establishment of a science-policy panel on chemicals, waste and pollution prevention at the third session of the open-ended working group (OEWG3).

Scope, objective and functions (working document UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2)

UNEA resolution 5/8 specified several features of the panel: it should be independent and intergovernmental. It also specified that the panel should have as its principal functions horizon scanning, assessments, identification of research gaps, and information sharing, among others. Switzerland is of the view that the functions of the panel are not reopened during OEWG3, with the exception of the capacity building function for which a bridge-building solution should be found. Switzerland is convinced that it is possible to combine elements of the two proposals. Current proposal 2 indeed foresees a capacity-building function that serves the other functions of the panel, and the other proposal addresses the capacity-building needs in line with the panel outlining specific activities. A bridge-building text would address both by noting the essence of the function would be to serve the other functions of the panel and adding some specific activities from proposal 2.

Operating principles (working document UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2)

At OEWG2, all possible operating principles were listed in order to ensure a holistic view. This list should not become any longer. On the contrary, now that the secretariat has prepared draft texts to complete all necessary text to establish the panel, it is important to streamline this list of operating principles by striking out the aspects that are now addressed in other parts of the text.

Rules of procedures (working document UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2/Add.1)

We support the draft text proposed by the secretariat (UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2/Add.1). Two particularly important points that we would like to emphasize are: (1) consensus would be the general practice and voting should be possible as a last resort (2) at OEWG3 we will have to make sure that the Rules of procedures and the institutional arrangements are consistent.

Agreement on the Rules of procedure will determine when the panel can realistically initiate its work. It is therefore Switzerland's view that the OEWG3 should finalize the text of this annex, so that it can be forwarded by the intergovernmental meeting to the Plenary for adoption at its first meeting.

Financial arrangement and procedures (working documents UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2 and UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG3/2/Add.2)

The financial arrangement and procedures are also particularly relevant to enable the realization of the panel's full potential. We support the draft text proposed by the secretariat (UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG3/2/Add.2), which proposes a voluntary trust fund. The voluntary Trust Fund established with the panel should finance its activities as well as the secretariat. The adoption of the Panel's budget is the responsibility of the Plenary. The furnishment of the voluntary Trust Fund will be an important challenge to tackle as sufficient financing will determine the capacity of the panel to meet its objectives. Switzerland believes that the use of the UN voluntary indicative scale of assessments would be an important basis for that.

Process for determining the work programmed, including prioritization (working document UNEP/SPP/cwp/OEWG.3/2/Add.3)

This process determines who will be able to submit requests for potential activities to be undertaken by the panel and how these requests may be treated prioritized. The working document UNEP/SPP-

CWP/OEWG.3/2/Add.3 by the secretariat proposes a sensible approach that has already been proven as successful for IPBES:

1. Calls for inputs made by the Secretariat are broad and open to all stakeholders.
2. Inputs are analysed and prioritized under the leadership of the Interdisciplinary Expert Committee.
3. Building upon the prioritization, the draft work programme is developed and forwarded to the Plenary for decision.

This process allows a wide range of proposals to be made, then clustered and sorted according to policy relevance and priority, thus ensuring that the work of the panel stays focused and relevant.

Agreement on this process will determine when the panel can realistically initiate its work. It is therefore Switzerland's view that the OEWG3 should finalize the text of this annex, so that it can be forwarded by the intergovernmental meeting to the Plenary for adoption at its first meeting. This way the panel may start developing its work programme in the intersessional period between the 1st and 2nd plenary meeting.

Process for the preparation and clearance of panel deliverables (working document UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2/Add.4)

The process for preparing and clearing panel deliverables is a crucial aspect that sets the foundation for the effective and credible functioning of the panel. This should therefore include defining procedures for tasks, responsibilities, expert selection, error handling, source usage, data management, digital tools utilization, and safeguarding commercially sensitive information. As the working document UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2/Add.4 by the secretariat addresses appropriately all these aspects, it is a good basis for discussion. It is important to ensure clarity with regards to the term's "validation", "acceptance", and "approval" and their use.

Conflict of interest policy (working documents UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2 and UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2/Add.5)

Switzerland welcomes the good progresses made on the conflict-of-interest policy during OEWG2 and believes that the text can be finalized at the OEWG3. The conflict-of-interest policy should apply to everyone active within any body of the panel, while reflecting one's specific responsibilities.

Secretariat hosting arrangements (working document UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/4)

Switzerland favors a joint Secretariat by UNEP and WHO for the Science-Policy Panel to benefit from the expertise and networks of both organizations. The draft decision for the intergovernmental meeting to give effect to arrangements in the foundational documents as proposed by the secretariat in document UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/4 should therefore be amended in order to reflect the option of a UNEP-WHO joint secretariat.

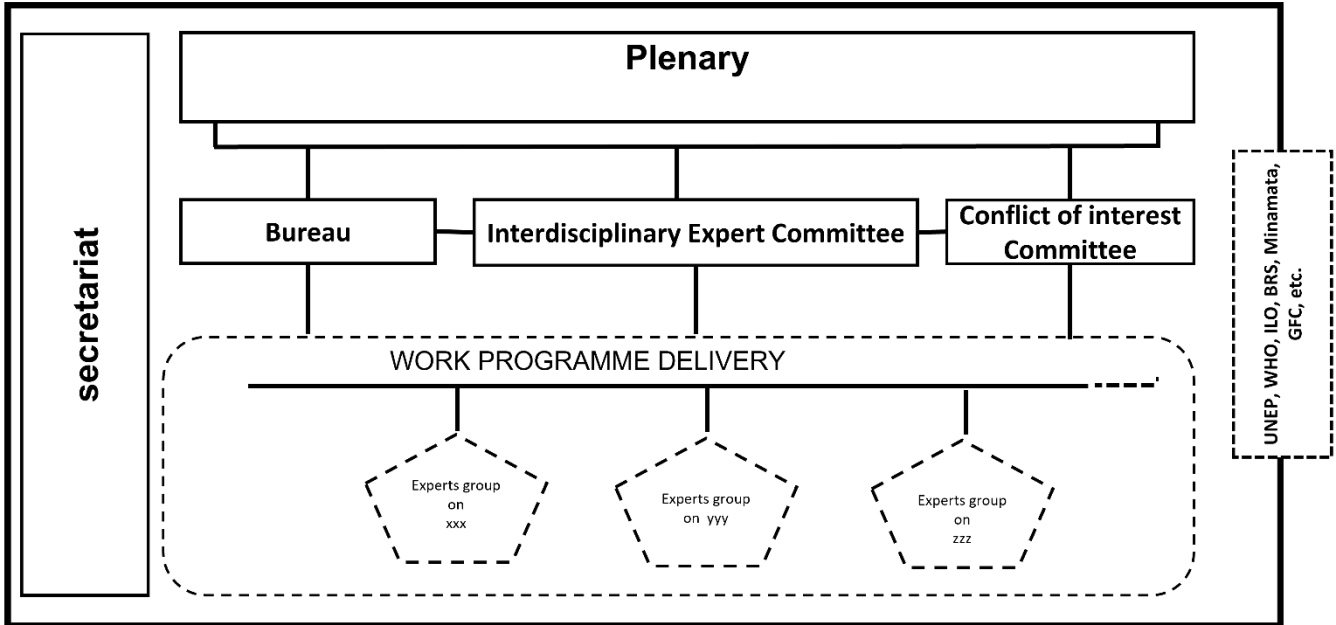
Institutional arrangements (working document UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2)

Regarding the institutional arrangements, Switzerland is convinced that IPBES offers an efficient and modern example to follow. The Plenary is the governing body of the panel. The Bureau's main function should be to provide administrative and policy oversight of and guidance to the Plenary's work during the intersessional period. The Bureau is to be composed of government representatives from the 5 UN regions. The main functions of the Interdisciplinary Expert Committee should be to provide policy-relevant scientific and technical advice to the Plenary on aspects of the Panel's programme of work and on scientific matters. Together with the Bureau, IEC should manage and oversee the processes linked to the programme of work and the deliverables in a transparent manner. Members of the Interdisciplinary Expert Committee should be nominated by government officials. A Committee on Conflict of interest should ensure that everyone involved in the panel and panel's work do it free of conflicts of interest. The Secretariat should not only provide administrative support, but also take up scientific and technical work, in consultation with the IEC and in support of all functions of the Panel. All other subsidiaries bodies, including technical support unites and experts' groups, are not permanent and should be established by the Plenary as appropriate. With such institutional arrangements, a Policy Committee is not necessary as the Plenary ensures the policy relevance of

the panel's work with its decisions. It is Switzerland's view that a policy committee would create overlap and interfere with the Bureau's work and with the Plenary's responsibilities.

Switzerland's view of institutional arrangements:

SCIENCE-POLICY PANEL



Caption: Regular line = permanent body; dashed line = non-permanent body