

Written Submission from the Science & Technology Major Group (S&TMG) to OEWG3, as it relates to the establishment of a science-policy panel for chemicals, waste and the prevention of pollution (SPP-CWP).

Contacts on behalf of the S&T MG working on the SPP

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This document presents a position from the Science & Technology Major Group on ‘Institutional Arrangements’

1. Institutional Arrangements

Governing Body/Plenary: The S&T MG fully respects the decision-making powers of governments and member states and the role that the Governing Body/Plenary will perform in the SPP-CWP, in deciding its composition, processes and work programme.

The S&T MG advocates for the continued involvement of civil society representatives and non-government scientists, in all aspects of the SPP when it is established, mainly as *observers* on the Governing Body/Plenary with voices that are heard and respected by governments in their decision-making processes. With the precedence of the involvement of civil society roles in GEO, we propose the following regarding the Interdisciplinary Expert Committee.

Interdisciplinary Expert Committee (IEC):

The S&T MG proposes that the Major Groups & Stakeholder community are offered 9 ex officio positions on the Interdisciplinary Expert Committee, allowing the role of civil society to be fully represented from the 9 UNEP Major Groups.

The S&T MG acknowledges and supports the current suggested inclusion of 5 members for each of the 5 UN regional groups on the IEC, elected and as endorsed by the Governing Body/Plenary. These will all be government representatives, and we expect these individuals will join as ‘government experts’ with appropriate technical and policy backgrounds.

It is also important for success of the SPP to have civil society representatives on this group to provide expertise and evidence that is non-governmental and independent of political processes.

Referring to UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2 page 7, paras 17 and 18 and footnote 6:

17. Interdisciplinary Expert Committee members are selected for their scientific, technical [, socioeconomic] or [policy] expertise and knowledge of the main elements of the work of the Panel.

The inclusion of ‘socioeconomic’ and ‘policy’ in this paragraph is a good addition and serves to strengthen the science-policy interface in the IEC.

18. [Representatives of non-governmental participants as well as the Chair of the United Nations Environment Management Group may participate as ex officio members in Interdisciplinary Expert Committee meetings. The representatives of non-governmental participants are elected by and from non-governmental participants engaged in the work of the Panel.⁶]

The current proposal in footnote 6 is *'The ad hoc open-ended working group may wish to consider electing five [civil society] representatives to serve in this role, one each from health, environment, industry, trade union and public interest groups'*. This proposal has been grandfathered over from previous bodies; today this proposal could be improved upon to reflect the special role of Science & Technology here and reflect the current Major Groups & Stakeholders systems better.

Therefore, the S&T MG respectfully requests of member states, that instead of the 5 civil society representatives as mentioned in footnote 6, resources include for 9 civil society ex officio members on the IEC, as aligned to and elected by the UNEP Major Groups & Stakeholder community.

As with government representatives, nominees would be included on the basis of their relevant scientific and technical expertise in a policy relevant context. Examples of the types of scientific and technical expertise that would ideally need to be covered by civil society in the context of chemicals, waste and pollution prevention include science areas such as i) human health, ii) environment, iii) social sciences, iv) evidence from indigenous peoples and their communities, and v) an understanding of green and sustainable innovations. Independent chemical sciences expertise in these science and technology areas is crucial for chemicals, waste and pollution prevention discussions ***to strengthen the science-policy interface.***

Such inclusion of trusted civil society voices in the IEC with relevant technical backgrounds can provide valuable insights and perspectives, that could help lead to successful, objective and technically achievable outcomes for the functions of the IEC (para 20). For example, voices to counter-balance extreme or highly political or conflicting agendas, with evidence and independent insights that could help the IEC in reaching impactful consensus positions that are workable.

It is especially important for the IEC to include the voices of indigenous peoples and their communities as are impacted in real-life by chemicals, waste and pollution. We support providing a strong voice to the Children and Youth community, whose future is threatened by growing pollution.

Policy Committee

Referring to UNEP/SPP-CWP/OEWG.3/2 pages 7 and 8, paras 21-36.

At OEWG2 in Nairobi, a 'policy committee' was proposed by one member state.

It is the strongly held view of the S&T MG that a 'Policy Committee' is not necessary for efficient functioning of the SPP. Such a separate policy committee would be seen as a duplication of effort, bring increased costs and timelines to the work, and could in reality **weaken the science-policy interface**, when the intent of the whole process is to *strengthen* the science-policy interface.

It is the view of the S&T MG that a separate policy committee is not needed but a 'policy' working group/task force as part of the IEC would be sufficient in considering advice on or development of policy options etc. and this work would then feed into prioritisation mechanisms led by the IEC, which bring science and policy together effectively.

*A separate Policy Committee could, in reality, **weaken the concept of the SPP**, separating scientists from policymakers, lead to lengthening of processes, miscommunications, constraints on scientific discussion and increased costs of delivery by having an additional committee.*

*It is important to note that the above considerations on Institutional Arrangements whilst they stand alone, are also being considered in the context of there being a newly established mechanism of scientific contributions into the SPP, though **The Concept of an ‘SPP Science Alliance’**.*

In the S&T MG community, it is recognised that there are many scientists in the world who may have useful evidence and knowledge to share. To cast the net as widely as possible so that governments and stakeholders have access to as many of the best and most relevant scientific experts as possible on priority issues, it is proposed that a new ‘SPP Science Alliance’ is formed, that acts as an umbrella organisation focused on the work of the SPP that can coordinate the participation of experts. An SPP Science Alliance could provide a formalised mechanism to share the best scientific evidence and build new networks, possibly even capacity building activities given adequate funding, that would be useful for strengthening the science-policy interface even further than can be achieved through the current membership of the S&T MG.

Importantly, such a concept requires funding to be established, estimated to be on the scale of a few hundred thousands of Euros/dollars to initiate. If member states agree, it would be useful if a statement could be declared in OEWG that such an SPP Science Alliance would be considered useful to the SPP.

Please see the separate submission document from S&T MG on ‘The request for policymaker support to establish a SPP Science Alliance – an opportunity to broaden the inclusion of the scientific community in the science-policy panel for chemicals, waste and pollution prevention’.

2. Managing Conflicts of Interest

All participants in the SPP or a new Science Alliance must be asked to record and declare both their financial and non-financial interests.

As output from OEWG2, the secretariat produced a template of a proposed form Appendix B for individuals to declare their interests. This form appears to be useful and generally fit-for-purpose with a few suggested amendments.

It is suggested that the form makes it clear that interests are to be declared from the past 4 years.

Interests may be broader than scientific in nature, but could also be business and personal interests.

It is suggested that there is a *mandated* culture of transparency, i.e. publication of SPP members interests online, and an expectation that participants verbally declare any relevant interests in every meeting, recorded in the minutes, where advice is being generated, technical reviews performed and decisions made.

It is noticed that interests of family members such as spouse or civil partners are not included in the form. Benefits to spouse/civil partners should also be explicitly mentioned in section 13 of the Appendix B form. The question asks about adverse impacts, but this should also include where financial or non-financial ‘benefits’ could be regarded as a legitimate interest.