

3.0 OEWG Science-Policy Panel to Contribute Further to the Sound Management of Chemicals, Waste, and Pollution Prevention

Accredited Scientific and Technological Community Major Group Stakeholder Statement

Society of Environmental Toxicology and Chemistry (SETAC)

Background

SETAC is a professional scientific society and is a UNEP accredited Scientific and Technological Community Major Group stakeholder. SETAC is very concerned with the global threat that poorly managed chemicals and waste pose to human and ecological health. We firmly believe that our mission to advance environmental science and management and our principles of multidisciplinary approaches, sectoral balance, and science-based objectivity, as well as our global network of environmental experts, make SETAC especially suited to partner in any endeavor when the shared goals are to better understand and improve our environment.

As such, SETAC was delighted with the adoption of resolution 5/8 at UNEA 5.2. Following that decision, SETAC established an advisory panel on chemicals management (SETAC CheM Panel) to coordinate SETAC's contributions to the policy dialogue at UNEP and the Open Ended Working Group (OEWG) for the establishment of a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution (SPP CWP). The members of the SETAC CheM Panel are appointed by the SETAC World Council, guided by the SETAC principles, to ensure geographic and sectoral balance, interdisciplinarity, and focus on science-based objectivity. As such, the SETAC CheM Panel includes members from Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, Latin America, and North America, across Academia, Business, Government, and NGO sectors. The panel is composed of Michelle C. Bloor (Chair, University of Glasgow, U.K.), Stijn Baken (International Copper Association, Belgium), Adriana Bejarano (Shell Global Solutions, North America), Tarryn L. Botha (University of Johannesburg, South Africa), Michelle Embry (Health and Environmental Science Institute (HESI), North America), Darren Koppel (Australian Institute of Marine Sciences (AIMS), Australia), Todd Gouin (TG Environmental Research, U.K.), Lorraine Maltby (University of Sheffield, U.K.), Amanda Reichelt-Brushett (Southern Cross University, Australia), Helena Silva de Assis (Federal University of Paraná, Brazil).

The Institutional Arrangements of the Governing Body and Plenary

SETAC acknowledges and respects the decision-making powers of governments and Member States and their role in determining the SPP CWP procedures, the program of work, and the configuration of the Governing Body and Plenary. **In all aspects of the SPP CWP when it is established, SETAC would urge for the continued involvement of civil society representatives and non-government scientists.** Including civil society representatives and non-government scientists as observers in the Governing Body and Plenary would be an inclusive approach, and would ensure that the widest possible range of independent robust evidence is available for governments in their decision-making processes.

Composition of the Interdisciplinary Expert Group

While SETAC appreciates that the Interdisciplinary Expert Group needs to be agile, which is sometimes easier to achieve with smaller groups, and while we understand that the expertise required for this group will rotate depending on the questions under investigation and the expertise needed for that particular focus, we would ask that consideration is given to increasing the number of seats for civil society representatives and non-government scientists. **SETAC suggests that as a minimum, each of the nine UNEP Major Groups is allocated one seat.** Each Major Group has the breadth of expertise necessary for the SPP CWP processes. Without this allocation, some of this expertise will be missing from the work of the group, such as Indigenous scientific knowledge and independent non-government science.

The Proposed Policy Committee

SETAC considers the inclusion of the proposed Policy Committee as a duplication of effort, which would add another layer of unnecessary oversight and financial burden to the SPP CWP processes. The proposed Policy Committee is likely to weaken the science-policy process and slow it down. **SETAC suggests that the establishment of a 'Policy Working Group' within the Interdisciplinary Expert Group would be an ideal way to provide policy advice or policy development without the need to include an additional committee,** which would separate the science from the policy and potentially result in silos and communication challenges.

Conflicts of Interest

SETAC recommends that all participants in the SPP CWP must be asked to declare their financial and non-financial interests. The Conflict of Interest Form presented in Appendix B is a reasonable document, but SETAC has a few helpful suggestions to strengthen the evidence that it will generate.

- The form should ask for interests to be declared for the past 4 years.
- Interests could be broader than scientific, so business and personal interests should also be requested.
- Spouse/civil partners in addition to the already mentioned children and siblings should be included in Appendix 2, Question 13.
- As well as considering how their work with the SPP CWP might have an 'adverse effect' (Appendix 2, Question 13), the form should include a question on the reverse situation, i.e. the *beneficial* effect that might come from 'the interests of any other persons or entities with whom you have substantial ...?'

In addition to the completion of the Conflict of Interest Form, and to ensure full transparency and trust in the SPP CWP processes, SETAC would encourage the publication of interests online. Furthermore, at the start of meetings, the chair should ask for attendees to verbally declare any relevant interests, which can then be recorded in the meeting minutes and, if deemed appropriate, the attendee can be excused.

Capacity Building

SETAC considers a global perspective to be important, but without losing sight of the specific issues that might have highly significant local impacts. For example, many value chains are global and the use of chemicals in one part of the world can have major environmental impacts in other geographical regions. In contrast, impacts at the local/ regional level also need to be considered, especially in less developed/ resourced regions. Consequently, it is key to consider the intended impact early in the process to allocate (or find) resources, for tangible actions in the assessments to be implemented.

SETAC considers capacity building to be of critical importance if the SPP CWP is to make a difference globally. Developing a mechanism to facilitate connectivity and partnership with various groups is vital. SETAC has a framework that can bring this to the fore e.g., Special Sessions at our Annual Meetings (Europe, North America and Asia Pacific) and Biannual Meetings (Latin America and Africa), Interest Groups, horizon scanning, training courses, workshops, certification program ([IBERA Certification](#)) and other engagement activities with our membership. SETAC also has experience working collaboratively with other organizations and we have the capability and desire to do so to support the SPP CWP, and further develop our collaborative capacity.