

Opening Ceremony: third session of the ad hoc open-ended working group to prepare proposals for a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution (OEWG-3)

Monday 17 June, 10:00-10:30, Plenary, CICG, Geneva

Opening Remarks by Katrin Schneeberger, Director Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland (5 minutes)

The spoken word prevails

Excellencies,

Dear colleagues,

- Today is an important day as we start the last round of negotiations for the establishment of a Science-Policy Panel on chemicals, waste and pollution prevention (SPP).
- It is my pleasure to welcome you in Geneva, heart of the global governance on chemicals, waste and pollution, for this important step.
- In order to make the right decisions in addressing the global environmental challenges, it is key that we as policy makers are well informed and that there is a robust scientific basis.
- With UNEA Resolution 5/8 we decided two years ago to establish an independent intergovernmental panel that delivers policy-relevant scientific evidence without being policy prescriptive.
- For this endeavor we do not have to reinvent the wheel. We can draw from the structure, the experience and best practices of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).
- The establishment of the Science-policy panel is a key contribution to the work done under global conventions and frameworks.
- The Science-Policy Panel will be relevant for policy areas such as health, environment, agriculture, and the circular economy. It will serve policy makers, civil society, industry, and science itself.
- The outcomes of the Science-policy panel will go beyond scientific reports, as it will provide a holistic view of the technical, economic, social and other aspects of a specific issue, for example recycling, cosmetics or aquaculture.

- This holistic work will need broad expertise and participation. In particular, the interlinkage between environmental pollution and public health should be given appropriate attention.
- A technical and administrative support for the panel from UNEP and WHO together would be a good way to reach this objective.
- The experience with the IPCC has shown that a joint secretariat carried by two organizations brings advantages: The panel benefits from the technical, political and organizational expertise of two institutions. Instead of using one network, two networks can be used to involve experts in the work. And findings can be disseminated to a wider audience.
- It is most important that the Panel can start its work as soon as possible. We are therefore looking forward to the intergovernmental meeting to establish the panel as well as the first plenary session at the beginning of 2025.
- For that to happen, the foundational document and parts of its annexes must be ready by the end of this week.
- In other words: We are very close to establishing together an intergovernmental panel that is transparent and impartial, and whose outcomes are credible, policy relevant and scientifically robust.
- The UNEA Resolution on establishing the panel gives us the frame, the IPCC and IPBES give us good examples. You have been doing good work and I am convinced that we can finalize our work in the coming days. And then celebrate the new panel at the intergovernmental meeting.
- Thank you.

Background

A l'initiative de la Suisse, la 5e Assemblée générale des Nations unies sur l'environnement (UNEA5 2022) a décidé de créer un « Science-Policy Panel (SPP) to contribute further the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution ». L'idée est de créer une institution similaire à celle qui existe avec IPCC

sur le changement climatique et IPBES sur la biodiversité et les services écosystémiques. Les négociations à ce sujet ont été lancées, le troisième et dernier cycle de négociations a lieu maintenant à Genève. La Suisse se portera candidate pour accueillir le siège du secrétariat à Genève mais cette question du placement du panel ne sera pas discuté ouvertement maintenant afin de ne pas entraver les négociations substantielles.