

**STATEMENT BY WORKERS AND TRADE UNIONS**  
**ON**  
**SPECIAL PROGRAMME AND ITS ToR and OMNIBUS DECISION ON CHEMICALS AND**  
**WASTE**  
**OPEN ENDED MEETING OF COMMITTEE OF PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVES**  
**(OECPR)**  
**MARCH 2014, NAIROBI, KENYA**

**Chair,**

The impact of chemicals and hazardous waste is a serious health and environmental challenge in the world of work. The International Labour Organization (ILO) estimates (conservative estimates) that globally approximately 4 MILLION workers are poisoned annually. Why are workers more uniquely vulnerable? It is because workers are involved in all stages in the life cycle of chemicals. First, unlike other vulnerable groups they directly participate in the designing, research and manufacturing of new chemical substances. Due to this unique role, Workers and their families have always become frontline victims of many globally re-known workplace chemical accidents. Second, workers have no choice on what chemicals to use in their workplace. Most often than not, the choice is in the hand of their employers. Third, is the ‘double’ exposure at work and at home.

Based on these facts, our major group would like to bring to your attention and to the attention of distinguished delegates the following concerns:

1. Workers and Trade Unions expect the Special Program and its Terms of Reference to accommodate the effective engagement and participation of workers and their trade unions and indeed of all other CSO in all projects that will be developed under it. This has to include access to finance and information. We therefore call upon parties to also take into account these issues while deliberating the Omnibus Decision on Chemicals and waste. Non recognition of these issues in the decision will not only be against the rio+20 spirit but will also allow the international community and national governments to achieve the SAICM 2020 Goal as stipulated in the Dubai Declaration.
2. Developing countries, countries with economies in transition, Workers and Trade Unions and other CSOs have benefitted a lot from the SAICM QSP over the past 10 years despite the fact that those who committed themselves to the financing of the QSP did not fully honour their commitments. Since, there is no credible commitment that the special programme will secure required financial resource in an adequate and timely manner, it will be extremely risky if we allow the special program to replace an already existing funding mechanism that has proved very useful. We therefore call upon Parties particularly those from developing countries and those in transitional economies to support the retention of the QSP until when the Special program is adequately funded. There are various on-going SAICM QSP in a number of developing countries and countries in economies in transition and sun setting of the QSP at this point will deliver a serious blow to progress so far made in the sound management of chemicals.

**Chair,**

I think you and all distinguished delegates for your kind attention,