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Global Framework on Chemicals – for a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste

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Open-ended Working Group of the Global Framework on Chemicals – for a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste
First meeting
Punta del Este, Uruguay, 24–27 June 2025
Agenda item 3 of the provisional agenda*
Global Framework on Chemicals

Quick views on the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG-1) of the Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC)

Note by the Secretariat

The annex to the present note contains a document presenting an overview of the views of IPEN - for a toxics free future, on themes and key topics for the first meeting of the Open-ended Working Group. It is submitted by and is reproduced as received by the secretariat of the Framework.

The present note, including its annex, has not been formally edited.

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* UNEP/GFC/OEWG.1/1

QUICK VIEWS ON THE FIRST MEETING OF THE OPEN-ENDED WORKING GROUP (OEWG-1) OF THE GLOBAL FRAMEWORK ON CHEMICALS (GFC)

IPEN
for a toxics-free future

June 2025

The Global Framework on Chemicals - For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste (GFC) is a multisectoral and multistakeholder agreement, emphasizing the importance of engagement and meaningful participation of both governments and non-governmental organizations from a wide range of sectors. It is the only international framework for addressing most of the world's concerns around chemicals. While not legally binding, it expresses commitments made by governments and stakeholders that must be upheld.

The first Open-Ended Working Group meeting (OEWG-1) of the GFC will take place from June 24 to 27, 2025, in Punta del Este, Uruguay, to prepare for the First International Conference of the GFC in 2026 (IC-1). The OEWG-1 schedule includes contact groups on Issues of Concern and GFC Implementation, and informal discussions on the measurability structure, the GFC Fund, and other topics.

This document presents an overview of IPEN´s Views on themes and key topics for the OEWG-1. For detailed comments on the meeting documents, please see [Briefing Note: Enabling Progress Under the Global Framework on Chemicals]. In addition, see the IPEN beyond 2020 perspectives.

Overall outcomes of the meeting

IPEN believes it is crucial that the OEWG-1 successfully delivers on two overall goals:

1. **Plans for accelerated implementation of the GFC**: Since its adoption in 2023, GFC activities have mostly been focused on finalizing aspects of the framework, which has delayed progress towards its objectives. Therefore, the OEWG-1 must conclude with specific, targeted action items that significantly accelerate implementation of the GFC. A key item will be to ensure that the Global Alliance on Highly Hazardous Pesticides (GAHHPs) becomes operational without further delay.

2. **Targeted actions to implement the multistakeholder and multisectoral approach**: The GFC is unique in its recognition that it takes all stakeholders and sectors to protect human health and the environment from harm from chemicals and waste. However, it is imperative that the multistakeholder and multisectoral approach is comprehensively implemented and not only words on paper. Therefore, significant efforts need to be put in place to ensure consistent, meaningful representation and implementation of this approach in all aspects of the GFC, with an emphasis on ensuring meaningful engagement and participation of civil society.

Key thematic outcomes

Emerging policy issues and issues of concern

Working document: UNEP/GFC/OEWG.1/5
IPEN resources: Lead Paint Elimination; Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals; Nanotechnology; PFAS country situation reports, PFAS in disposable food packaging and tableware, in microwave popcorn, in waterproof and stain-resistant clothing, Chemicals in plastics and other Products; Campaign for Toxics-Free Electronics.

Under the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), more than 100 governments identified the need for national and concerted international action on eight Emerging policy issues and other issues of concern.[1] These were transferred on an interim basis to the GFC as Issues of Concern (IoCs). Their path forward will be decided at IC-1, based on the outcomes of the OEWG-1.

IPEN views:

- None of the IoCs have been sufficiently addressed and all fulfill the criteria to be retained under the GFC.
- Nanotechnology is used in food, cosmetics, agriculture, construction, textiles, electronics, and many other industries. Hazards of many types of nanoparticles such as titanium dioxide, silver, and graphene have been well documented, but many countries still lack regulatory controls and awareness is low. Nanotechnology must therefore be retained as an IoC.
- In addition to the recommendations by the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), a submission process until IC-1 should be put in place to gather evidence and input from governments and civil society.
- Identifying a mechanism of action for an IoC is not the same as it being sufficiently addressed. Therefore, until the Issue is shown to be resolved, it must remain an IoC.
- For successful progress on the IoCs, mechanisms of implementation and needs for capacity building must be identified, resources allocated, and clear work plans developed and effectively implemented.
- Relevant aspects of the IoCs, including nanotechnology, should be integrated into the implementation programs, in addition to specific action on each of the IoCs.
- Further efforts are needed to ensure meaningful multisectoral and multistakeholder engagement in addressing IoCs, with an emphasis on ensuring meaningful engagement and participation of civil society.
- To add lead exposure sources not sufficiently addressed as a new IoC, this must follow the procedures laid down in the GFC text for nomination, selection, and adoption.

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[1] Lead in paint; Chemicals in products; Hazardous substance within the life cycle of electrical and electronic products; Nanotechnology and manufactured nanomaterials; Endocrine-disrupting chemicals; Environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants; Perfluorinated chemicals and the transition to safer alternatives; Highly hazardous pesticides

Global Alliance on Highly Hazardous Pesticides (GAHHPs)

Working document: UNEP/GFC/OEWG.1/10
IPEN resource: The Global Threat from Highly Hazardous Pesticides

The GAHHPs aims to facilitate global action to phase out HHPs and promote safer alternatives, particularly non-chemical approaches. Lessons learned from the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint show that effective national regulatory action was taken in countries where a funded multistakeholder and multisectoral approach was applied. However, the start-up of the GAHHPs has been lengthy and mainly focused on coordination between UN Agencies rather than engagement of stakeholders.

IPEN views:

- The OEWG-1 should agree to a work plan to launch the GAHHPs in late 2025 or early 2026, with actions focused on finalizing essential elements to launch the GAHHPs.
- The proposed Operational Framework is based on an unnecessarily complicated structure that will require significant resources to function and needs to be simplified.
- The governance of the GAHHPs must mirror the multisectoral and multistakeholder approach of the GFC, with an emphasis on ensuring meaningful engagement and participation of civil society.
- Adequate and sustainable funding needs to be allocated to the work of the GAHHPs to support implementation.

Gender Action Plan

Working document: UNEP/GFC/OEWG.1/4
IPEN resources: Women, Chemicals and the SDGs; Women Leaders: Addressing Chemicals and Waste Issues.

The text of the GFC is explicit that implementation of the Framework should take groups in especially vulnerable situations into consideration, as well as advancing women's equality through women's full and equal participation and gender-inclusive approaches in all aspects of the implementation of the Framework, including in decision-making.

IPEN views:

- The continued development and finalization of the Gender Action Plan must be more participatory and ensure inclusive and diverse participation, including through open public consultations with a wide range of groups in different circumstances, regions, countries, and sectors.
- Gender equality is a fundamental right that is well-established in international law. The Gender Action Plan must align with international human rights instruments and commitments, and encompass all aspects of gender inequalities, including strategies for ensuring equality in decision-making and in the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, including a safe and healthy working environment.

International actions to implement the Global Framework on Chemicals

Working documents: UNEP/GFC/OEWG.1/6, UNEP/GFC/OEWG.1/8, UNEP/GFC/OEWG.1/9
IPEN resource: Beyond 2020: Chemical Safety And Agenda 2030

IPEN views:

- Implementation programs must be transparent and ensure integration of the multistakeholder and multisectoral approach of the GFC at all levels, and governance of the programs must include equal participation of civil society. Programs must be complementary and take the situations in developing countries into account. The programs should be clearly coupled to specific GFC objectives, with workplans that include targets and milestones that track measurable progress.
- While the measurability structure will not be formally negotiated at OEWG-1, its proposed set of indicators must be reviewed and, as required, adjusted to ensure they effectively measure progress towards the GFC objectives. The structure must include indicators that measure resources that have been allocated to achieve progress, and allow for publicly accessible, transparent data systems, and the ability to utilize community-based and civil society-led monitoring initiatives.
- Cooperation and Coordination between the GFC and other international agreements and national actions is crucial for its implementation. This should also include promotion of high-level engagement at the UNGA and integration of the multistakeholder and multisectoral approach at all levels, with an emphasis to ensure meaningful engagement of civil society.

National actions to implement the Global Framework on Chemicals

Working document: UNEP/GFC/OEWG.1/7

IPEN Views:

- National implementation of the GFC is a key priority and must be transparent and include participatory stakeholder consultation mechanisms and public access to information.
- Governments should designate and mandate National Focal Points (NFPs) to serve as coordinators to actively engage a broad range of Ministries, Agencies, and stakeholders, including civil society
- NFPs must be adequately resourced and supported, including through capacity building, to effectively fulfill their roles.

IPEN Views (continued)

- National Plans of Action should be developed, building on and integrating national strategies and implementation of other international agreements, and should include concrete roles for civil society, Indigenous Peoples, and affected communities. The Plans must include monitoring and evaluation of progress.
- The Plans should include activities on GFC priorities such as Issues of Concern, Gender, the Global Alliances to Eliminate Lead Paint and on Highly Hazardous Pesticides, and include specific gender targets, indicators, and gender differentiated data collection.

Finance and Capacity Building

Working documents: UNEP/GFC/OEWG.1/2, UNEP/GFC/OEWG.1/3, UNEP/GFC/OEWG.1/12
IPEN resource: Financing the Sound Management of Chemicals

The vastly inadequate funding available for the sound management of chemicals and waste is a significant obstacle to a successful GFC implementation. The public health cost associated with chemicals and waste is significant, especially in Low- and Middle Income Countries, and typically borne by individuals and/or public funds. At the same time, in 2023, the total value of the global chemicals industry was estimated to be €5.2 trillion and expected to grow significantly until 2030.

IPEN Views:

- There must be adequate, predictable, and sustainable funding for building institutional and technical capacities through application of the "Polluter Pays" Principle, to generate funding from the chemical industry and companies using hazardous chemicals, for example, through fiscal and cost recovery frameworks.
- Ensure finalization of the Cost of Inaction report to serve as the foundation for financial considerations and actions at IC-1
- Facilitate monitoring and evaluation of financial flows by establishing mechanisms to track investments and expenditures related to chemical management, ensuring transparency, accountability, and responsible governance.

The independent evaluation of SAICM recognized the SAICM Quick Start Program as a successful outcome, and the high impact of civil society projects was highlighted. In addition, civil society can act as an effective bridge to facilitate effective multisectoral and multistakeholder action.

Therefore, IPEN calls for:

- Increased contributions to the GFC Fund, including from the private sector, in line with the polluter pays principle.
- Including civil society in the GFC Fund Executive Board to mirror the multistakeholder nature of the GFC, to ensure equitable access to funds.
- Scheduled sessions at the OEWG-1 to discuss lessons learned, including recommendations for improving the application process, improved sectoral and stakeholder diversity, and facilitation of support for proposal development.