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

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Global Framework on Chemicals – for a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste
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Item 5 (a) of the provisional agenda*

Global Framework on Chemicals – accelerating action: issues of concern

Accelerating action: new nominations of issues of concern – supplementary information

Note by the secretariat**

I. Introduction

1. One of the functions of the International Conference under the Global Framework on Chemicals is to consider issues of concern and to focus attention on issues that may benefit from international action.

2. The procedure for nominating, reviewing and considering issues of concern is set out in Annex I to the Framework. The process is intended to be open, transparent and inclusive, and provides for the participation of all stakeholders.

3. In accordance with those procedures, four issues of concern were nominated for consideration at the first session of the International Conference:

(i) Chemicals management issues of special concern for children's health, submitted by the Chemicals and Waste Youth Platform;

(ii) Towards a broader approach on lead: expanding the scope beyond lead in paint, submitted by the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution;

(iii) Pharmaceutical pollution and associated chemicals, submitted by the University of York;

(iv) Addressing information gaps in chemical hazard assessment to protect human and animal health and the environment through global capacity-building in New Approach Methodologies, submitted by the World Federation for Animals.

4. The nominations are presented for consideration by the International Conference in working document UNEP/GFC/IC.1/5. The present note provides supplementary information on the nominations received, the process followed by the secretariat, and the comments received from stakeholders.

* UNEP/GFC/IC.1/1.

** This document has not been formally edited

II. Procedure for considering issues of concern

5. Annex I to the Framework sets out the procedure for nominating and considering issues of concern. An issue of concern is defined as an issue involving any phase in the life cycle of chemicals that has not yet been generally recognized, is insufficiently addressed, or arises as a potential concern from the current level of scientific information, and that may have adverse effects on human health and/or the environment that would benefit from international action.

6. Annex I provides that nominations should be submitted no later than six months prior to a meeting of the International Conference. For the first session of the International Conference, stakeholders were invited to submit nominations by 31 May 2026 using the nomination form and accompanying workplan template.

7. Following receipt of the nominations, the secretariat reviewed the submissions for completeness against the information requirements set out in Annex I. The nominations and accompanying workplans were made available on the Framework website for stakeholder comments from 19 June to 21 August 2026. Comments received from stakeholders were made publicly available by the secretariat (https://owncloud.unog.ch/s/0iDX7gIFTIGKEqb).

8. Proponents were informed of the comments received and given an opportunity to revise or clarify their nominations, as appropriate. The final nominations and workplans are available on the Framework website (https://www.unep.org/global-framework-chemicals/implementation/issues-concern).

III. Summary of the new nominations of issues of concern

9. Each proponent completed the nomination form and submitted an accompanying workplan. The submissions set out why, in the proponent's view, the issue should be considered as an issue of concern under the Framework and provided information intended to facilitate consideration of the issue against the information requirements set out in Annex I.

A. Chemicals management issues of special concern for children's health

10. The nomination on chemicals management issues of special concern for children's health highlights children's distinct vulnerability to chemical exposures and the potential lifelong and intergenerational effects of childhood exposures. The accompanying workplan proposes activities on science, monitoring and data; education and capacity-building; policy and implementation support; partnerships and knowledge-sharing; and periodic review.

11. Comments received highlighted children's particular vulnerability to chemical exposures and called for greater attention to cumulative and mixture exposures, age-disaggregated data, biomonitoring, risk assessment and indicators of exposure reduction and health outcomes. Comments also called for clearer coordination with existing work by WHO, UNICEF and other organizations. Some stakeholders considered children's health a cross-cutting issue and suggested that it could also be advanced through other mechanisms under the Framework.

B. Towards a broader approach on lead: expanding the scope beyond lead in paint

12. The nomination on a broader approach to lead proposes expanding the scope beyond lead in paint to include additional sources and pathways of exposure, including used lead-acid batteries, consumer products, food, plastics, cosmetics, textiles, contaminated sites, industrial emissions and occupational settings. The accompanying workplan sets out an objective of ending childhood lead poisoning by 2040 and reducing lead exposure among vulnerable and at-risk populations,

13. The nomination identifies the Global Alliance on Health and Pollution (GAHP) as the lead organization with support from Cambodia, Ivory Coast, Nigeria, Paraguay, Uganda, Uruguay and UNEP.

14. Comments received supported attention to lead sources beyond lead in paint and called for clearer prioritization of sources, including used lead-acid batteries, as well as stronger national inventories, surveillance, monitoring and regulatory and enforcement capacity. Comments also emphasized complementarity with existing work on lead in paint and other international initiatives, and some raised questions regarding the proposed timelines, roles of potential lead organizations and alignment of the 2040 childhood lead poisoning objective with the broader scope of the nomination.

C. Pharmaceutical pollution and associated chemicals

15. The nomination on pharmaceutical pollution and associated chemicals builds on the existing issue of concern on environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants and broadens the focus to pharmaceutical pollution and associated chemicals across the pharmaceutical life cycle. The accompanying workplan proposes activities on monitoring, data access, environmental risk assessment, ecopharmacovigilance approaches, green manufacturing, wastewater-related measures, capacity-building and international coordination.

16. The nomination identifies Health Care Without Harm and the University of York as lead organizations with support from the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF).

17. Comments received called for greater clarity on the scope of the nomination and its relationship with the existing issue of concern on environmentally persistent pharmaceutical pollutants. Suggested areas for further attention included manufacturing, wastewater treatment, environmental monitoring, unused and expired medicines, prescribing and procurement practices and ecopharmacovigilance. Some comments emphasized the need to avoid duplication with existing initiatives and to ensure that measures do not compromise access to essential medicines.

D. Addressing information gaps in chemical hazard assessment to protect human and animal health and the environment through global capacity-building in New Approach Methodologies

18. The nomination on New Approach Methods for chemical testing focuses on harmonized global efforts to support the implementation of New Approach Methods. The accompanying workplan proposes stakeholder mapping, establishment of a multistakeholder task force or advisory group, analysis of existing initiatives, capacity-building and training, guidance on regulatory systems structured to use NAMs, and support for data interoperability and access to new technologies.

19. The nomination identifies the World Federation for Animals (WFA) as the lead organization with support from the following organizations and experts as supporting stakeholders

a) Governments and Government Agencies: Health Canada (Government of Canada); Interagency Coordinating Committee on the Validation of Alternative Methods (ICCVAM; Government of the United States of America); Swedish National Committee for the Protection of Animals used for Scientific Purposes (Government of Sweden);

b) Scientific and Technical Expertise: Brazilian Center for the Validation of Alternative Methods (BraCVAM); Johns Hopkins Center for Alternatives to Animal Testing (CAAT); International Collaboration on Cosmetics Safety (ICCS); Institute for In Vitro Sciences, Inc (IIVS); Mattias Öberg, Institute of Environmental Medicine, Karolinska Institute; Sandrine Dubrac, Innsbruck Medical University;

c) Industry and Private Sector: Unilever, AnimalhealthEurope, KF Toxicology Consulting AB;

d) Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs): Lush Prize; Action des Femmes pour une Planète Bio (AFEPB); Animal-Free Science Advocacy (AFSA); Animals International; Forum Animal; GREDD; Humane World for Animals; International Association Against Painful Experiments on Animals; Jeune Engagé pour le Changement (JEC); Korean Animal Welfare Association (KAWA); Neduchuks Multi Concept; Phoenix Zones Initiative; Te Protejo; YOUNGO; Ärzte gegen Tierversuche.

20. Comments received included support for greater international coordination on New Approach Methodologies, while emphasizing differing levels of validation, endpoint coverage and regulatory acceptance. A recurring issue was the need to complement existing work by OECD and other specialized bodies and avoid parallel guidance or validation processes, while supporting knowledge-sharing, capacity-building and access to technical expertise. Comments also called for clearer governance and responsibilities, and some questioned whether a separate issue of concern was the most appropriate mechanism for advancing all the proposed activities.