

Opening Statement by South Africa, Intergovernmental Meeting to establish a Science-Policy Panel

20 June 2025

Madam Chair,

South Africa would like to thank the government of Uruguay for its hospitality since our arrival in Punta del Este and commend the SPP Open Ended Working Group Secretariat for the good organization of this meeting.

This Intergovernmental Meeting is the last session of a series of Open-Ended Working Group meetings planned to deliver on the UNEA 5/8 Resolution to establish the Science Policy Panel on chemicals and waste to prevent pollution. South Africa recognizes the progress made so far. In this regard, the success or failure of this session rests on the organization and prioritization of work.

South Africa is looking forward to a functional Panel to support the work of the Chemicals and Waste Management Cluster. We strongly believe that priority was given in finalizing the foundational documents that articulate the scope, objective and functions of the panel, operating principles, institutional arrangements amongst other critical operational elements of the panel. The main take away for South Africa will be the inclusion of capacity building as one of the core functions of the Panel that will enable developing nations to effectively engage with and benefit from the science policy panel. This is because capacity building is aimed at empowering scientists, policymakers, and practitioners in developing countries to co-produce knowledge and bridge the gap between science and policy. We believe that the conflict-of-interest policy document has been finalized as it is critical to ensure that the Panel fulfills its functions and objectives without harmful influences in its work, including members of its subsidiary bodies. The finalization of the Rules of Procedure,

programme of work and prioritization, and the financial procedures is important to ensure that once adopted, the Panel will immediately start its work.

Madam Chair,

South Africa advocates for a mandate of the SPP that would facilitate the co-production of knowledge through collaboration among scientists and policy practitioners. This will not only enhance the relevance and impact of scientific research but also ensure that policies are informed by the best available evidence. The experiences that could be drawn from the existing United Nations science-policy bodies will add value to the design and effectiveness of this SPP. South Africa advocates for the constitution of the Interdisciplinary Expert Committee that has a fair geographical representation and required disciplines.

In conclusion, Madam Chair, South Africa propose that the name of the Panel must include all key elements in the UNEA resolution 5/8. It should fully encompass the fundamental elements of broader international agreements on chemicals, waste and pollution prevention. We anticipate a highly productive session as we establish a science-policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution. We stand ready to constructively engage and contribute to our deliberations.

Thank you for your attention!