Global Alliance On Health and Pollution

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GAHP's Pre-Session Comments on the Documents prepared for the resumed 3rd Session of the SPP CWP OEWG to be held 15 – 18 June in Punta del Este

GAHP is a network of 70 international and national-level agencies and NGOs committed to a collaborative, multi-sectoral approach to address the global pollution crisis and its health and economic impacts. GAHP undertakes advocacy, research, and projects to identify actions that developing countries can take. GAHP works across the globe, assisting low- and middle-income countries in prioritizing health outcomes by addressing pollution through its Health and Pollution Action Plans (HPAPs), solutions planning, and resource mobilisation.

GAHP thanks the Chair, the Bureau and the Secretariat for the timely preparation of the documents and the extensive outreach efforts made.

General Approach

Pollution is a leading global health crisis. The Lancet Commission on Health and Pollution, to which GAHP contributed, found that pollution was the deadliest environmental risk factor worldwide, responsible for **16% of global deaths** in **2015**[1] and **2019**[2]**. This means that in the year since we met in Geneva, pollution has caused at least 9 million premature deaths.** This is a very conservative estimate but is more than 3 times the combined death toll from AIDS, malaria, and tuberculosis yet, unlike those terrible diseases, pollution deaths remain invisible and are not targeted by effective global action.

UNICEF, and GAHP's sister organisation, Pure Earth, have calculated that about half of the children in developing countries have blood lead levels that affect their capacity to learn, and the World Bank suggests that for each of these children who enter the labour force, their lifetime's earnings are reduced by 11%. These figures are shocking, yet reducing pollution hardly features in national budgets or international aid programmes. The future Science Policy Panel will be vital in raising awareness of this silent crisis and in showing that there are cost-effective solutions. We cannot afford to wait any longer to establish the Panel.

We have only 4 days left for the OEWG to reach agreement. GAHP will do all it can to help bring our work to a successful conclusion. We are inspired by Inge Anderson's advice in Geneva when she urged us to pare back the Foundational Document to its bare essentials. Her advice should apply equally to the Decisions and the Rules of Procedure.

[1] http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(17)32345-0

[2] Pollution and health: a progress update

As observers, we cannot insert language in texts, but we are willing to work with all Governments to draft compromises.

We may not need to solve all the thoughts that are currently bracketed. As we approach each contentious issue, we should be asking whether a solution is needed now or can the Panel itself decide, on the basis of experience. If the issue is not essential, we should leave it out. The alternative is to leave brackets in the documents we submit to the Intergovernmental Meeting, when the text in those brackets will almost certainly be deleted. It is our duty as professional negotiators not to give the decision-makers a polluted draft. Our common ultimate aim is a clean and healthy environment – surely we can produce a clean and healthy text.

GAHP's Key Messages

- **Scope.**
  Unsound management of chemicals and wastes are two forms of pollution, but it will also be important for the Panel to work on pollution in different media – air, water including oceans, and soil. States might want to take this into account in the name of the Panel, using the term Pollution as an overarching umbrella. Additionally, the current draft of the Foundational Document has Scope as a title but no corresponding text. Paragraph 2(k) in Section B of the Foundational Document listing operating principles and approaches contains elements for defining scope.

- **The right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment** was **recognised as a human right** by the UN General Assembly in 2022[3]. Using this universally agreed language should not be controversial, but some States are apparently uncomfortable about listing this as an operating principle[4] applied to the way the Panel undertakes its work. Perhaps recognising this human right in the agreed UNGA language, could form a very short **Preamble to the Foundational Document** setting the overall rationale for promoting a science policy interface.

- **Participation of Stakeholders in the work of the Panel.**
  Experience in Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) and elsewhere has shown the value of drawing on knowledge held by non-State actors in strengthening the science policy interface and their role in making the outputs of a Panel accessible to a wide audience. **Participation should include the right**

[3] Paragraph 1 of UNGA Resolution 76/300
[4] Foundational Document B.2.k

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to speak in Plenary and to propose drafting amendments to reports and decisions while accepting that, as the Panel will be an intergovernmental process, Governments alone will decide on eventual outcomes. **GAHP strongly supports the proposal in Rule 22.1 of the Rules of Procedure (Annex I of OEWG.3/7) that 5 members nominated by observers** of the Governing Body of the Panel should be members of the **Interdisciplinary Expert Committee** (IEC). Given that Rule 22.2 names several organisations that can be invited to the IEC as observers, GAHP would not expect these bodies to stand for election as members. GAHP fully accepts that the members of the IEC drawn from observers to the Governing Body would have to act in their personal expert capacity in accordance with Rule 22.4 and meet the selection criteria set out in Rule 23. **Section C.III. of the Foundational Document on the IEC needs to be brought into conformity with the Rules of Procedure and could be shortened to take out elements already covered by the Rules**.

- **Financial Arrangements**

  GAHP would like clarification on what is to happen to the Draft Financial Procedures in Document OEWG.3/INF/9 since they are being submitted to the OEWG simply as an information document. The Procedures are not included in OEWG.3/7 and so will not be forwarded by the Intergovernmental Meeting to the first session of the Panel. The Financial Arrangements in Section C.V of the Foundational Document do not seem comprehensive enough to reassure the Intergovernmental Meeting that the Panel will have the sound financial procedures needed to attract contributions at its First Session.

  Moreover, GAHP is concerned about discrepancies between the Financial Arrangements in Section V of the Foundational Document and the Draft Financial Procedures. GAHP hopes that a financial expert from UNEP will be available in Punta del Este to provide advice. In particular, the Financial Arrangements do not seem to abide by UNEP's Financial Rules, which make the Executive Director of UNEP and staff to whom they give delegated authority, solely accountable for spending money in a UNEP-administered Trust Fund. Such Trust Funds are set up by the ED on an invitation by the Governing Body of an organisation but are not established by that Governing Body as suggested in C.V.23 of the Foundational Document. Setting a budget and approving a work programme are the prerogative of the Governing Body as all members should be involved in these decisions. A Bureau may receive reports and review budget information, as set out in C.V.27, but should not *approve* budget decisions proposed by the Secretariat as suggested by paragraphs 7 and 13 of the Draft Financial Procedures.

Paragraph 7 might be accepted as a permanent delegated authority from the Governing Body to the Bureau to scrutinise some earmarked contributions on its behalf. However, this authority should make clear that the specific activities must be part of the Work Programme established by the Plenary and a floor of $2 million for any scrutiny seems excessive. The equivalent IPBES provision states that their Bureau can approve earmarked contributions of up to $300,000 for activities in their Work Programme but requires Plenary approval above that level.

Paragraph 13 is anyway redundant since paragraph 11 already makes clear that the Executive Secretary cannot spend more than the resources actually available in the Trust Fund.

- **The Role of WHO**. Given the broad agreement that the objective of the Panel is to strengthen the CWP science policy interface for the protection of human health and the environment, GAHP has long advocated a strong role for WHO in the work of the Panel.

  GAHP supports including an explicit reference to the World Health Assembly in paragraph 3 of the draft Decision of the Intergovernmental Meeting establishing the Panel (OEWG.3/6). This would invite WHA to consider the decision and would allow it to be brought to the attention of the 2026 World Health Assembly. This should not be controversial, as the WHA asked the WHO Director General in 2023[5] to actively contribute to the OEWG and explore the full range of options for the future involvement of WHO. As the custodian of the Global Burden of Disease data, WHO can make a major contribution to our Panel. The 78th Session of the WHA this month is expected to start a process leading to the adoption of a Global Action Plan on Lead Mitigation by 2027, and the WHO will encourage scientific and interdisciplinary research in the Plan.
  GAHP understands why the Draft Decision in OEWG.3/8 on Arrangements for the interim period before the Panel's first session foresees UNEP alone providing the interim secretariat. However, **GAHP would hope that proposals for a permanent Secretariat with WHO involvement would be prepared for the Panel's consideration in 2026**.

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[5] Resolution 17 of the 76th Session of the WHA