

Sustainable Buildings and Construction Summit 2026:

Lausanne, Switzerland | 20-22 April 2026

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Advancing on a Global Implementation Programme on Chemicals in Buildings and Construction

Side event

22 April 2026 | 15:00-16:30 (CET)

Concept Note

Background

The Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC), adopted in 2023, establishes a global commitment to the sound management of chemicals and waste across sectors. Target D6 calls for major economic sectors to develop and implement sustainable chemicals and waste management strategies by 2030.

The buildings and construction sector is one of the most materials- and chemicals-intensive sectors globally, with chemicals present across the entire lifecycle, from raw material extraction to demolition and waste management. Despite progress on climate and circularity, chemicals remain an under-addressed dimension of sustainability in construction.

Hazardous chemicals in construction materials can pose risks to human health and the environment and can limit the effectiveness of circular economy approaches by constraining reuse, recycling, and material recovery. Addressing these challenges requires improved transparency, identification of priority chemicals of concern, development of safer alternatives, and integration of chemicals considerations into lifecycle approaches and sectoral decision-making.

To address this gap, UNEP is supporting the development of a Construction Sector Implementation Programme under the GFC, aimed at mobilizing stakeholders across the construction value chain to operationalize relevant GFC targets. A draft Terms of Reference (TOR) has been developed and reviewed by an initial group of stakeholders, including industry, governments, civil society, and international organizations.

Building on insights from country-level action under the GEF-8 Supply Chains Integrated Programme and discussions held during the Summit, this session provides a timely opportunity to:

- broaden stakeholder engagement,
- advance the TORs,
- begin defining priorities and actions for the sector,
- support the transition toward safer, more sustainable, and circular built environments, in the lead-up to the GFC International Conference 2026.

Session Focus

This working session will focus on advancing the Construction Sector Implementation Programme, including:

- Presentation of the current draft TORs and key issues
- Identification of priority chemicals, materials, and lifecycle stages
- Mapping of existing initiatives contributing to GFC objectives
- Discussion of governance, participation, and next steps
- Initiation of a broader construction chemicals stakeholder network

Run of Show - 22 April 2026, 15:00-16:30 CET

Item	Time	Speaker / Organization	Description
Opening and Programme Framing	15 mins	UNEP & GFC Secretariat	This segment will introduce the Global Framework on Chemicals and its relevance to the construction sector, highlighting the rationale for developing a dedicated Construction Sector Implementation Programme. It will present the current status of the draft Terms of Reference and outline how the programme can support sector-wide action on chemicals and waste management.
Breakout Discussions: Priorities & Mapping	20 mins	Facilitators (Cambodia, Morocco, GBCCR, Drafting Group)	Participants will engage in structured group discussions to identify priority chemical risks, materials, and lifecycle stages requiring action. The discussions will also explore trade-offs between performance requirements and chemical safety, and map existing initiatives, standards, and practices that could support implementation. Particular attention will be given to identifying gaps, alignment opportunities, and areas where coordinated action is most urgently needed.
Breakout Reporting Back	25 mins	Rapporteurs	Each group will present key outcomes from their discussions, including priority areas for action, relevant initiatives, and critical gaps. This collective synthesis will help shape a shared understanding of sector priorities and inform the development of the programme roadmap.
Building the Network & Governance	10 mins	UNEP	This segment will introduce the proposed governance structure of the Construction Sector Implementation Programme, including the Expert Group and Core Working Group. Participants will be invited to express interest in contributing to the programme and to engage in its ongoing development.
Closing and Link to Session 2	5 mins	UNIDO	The session will conclude with a summary of key messages and a forward-looking outline of next steps toward the GFC International Conference 2026.

Expected Outputs

The session aims to deliver:

- Substantive input toward finalising or advancing the TORs
- Identification of priority areas for action in the construction sector
- Initial mapping of initiatives contributing to GFC implementation
- Expansion of a multi-stakeholder network on chemicals and construction
- Expressions of interest for participation in the Expert Group and Working Group