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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 - accelerating action: Gender Action Plan

ADVANCE

Accelerating action: mainstreaming a gender perspective and promoting gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls in chemicals and waste management

Note by the secretariat

I. Introduction

1. At its fifth session, held in Bonn, Germany, in September 2023, the International Conference on Chemicals Management adopted resolution V/4 on mainstreaming a gender perspective and promoting gender equality and empowerment of all women and girls in chemicals and waste management.

2. In that resolution, the Conference requested the secretariat of the Global Framework on Chemicals – for a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste, with the participation of interested stakeholders, to develop a gender action plan for consideration by the International Conference of the Framework at its first session in order to advance towards full, equal and meaningful participation by all women in decision-making, and to promote gender-responsive policies and mainstreaming a gender perspective in the implementation of the Framework, taking into account progress made in mainstreaming a gender perspective.

3. The secretariat also conducted an initial overview of progress towards the targets of the Framework, including gender-related aspects.

4. The present note sets out a summary of the process carried out to develop the gender action plan, an indicative overview of gender considerations in the implementation of the Framework, the draft plan itself (annex I) and a draft resolution on the matter (annex II).

II. Activities to implement the resolution

5. The work to develop a gender action plan was conducted in three phases: (a) a stocktaking and gap analysis exercise; (b) a consultation on the first draft; and (c) a review and further refinement of the draft. The secretariat reported on the first two phases at the meeting of the Open-ended Working Group of the Global Framework on Chemicals (Punta del Este, Uruguay, June 2025).[1] During phase 3,

* UNEP/GFC/IC.1/1.

[1] UNEP/GFC/OEWG.1/INF/3,

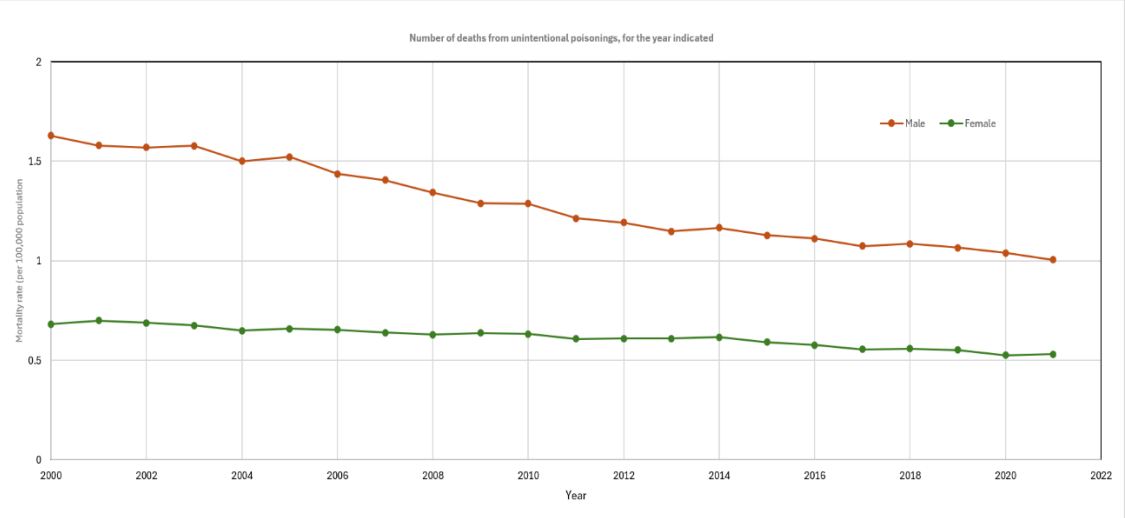
the draft gender action plan was revised in the light of the feedback received following its consideration by the Open-ended Working Group. Further consultations and outreach activities were conducted, including two webinars, held on 22 January and 12 February 2026.[2] The draft gender action plan is set out in annex I for consideration by the International Conference.

III. Indicative overview of gender considerations in the implementation of the Global Framework on Chemicals

6. To inform the International Conference about progress towards the targets of the Framework, the secretariat prepared an indicative overview[3] using available indicators and data sources as well as a short global survey that was conducted among stakeholders and that included questions on gender-related aspects. The survey yielded 212 responses in total.[4] This section provides an indicative overview of gender considerations in the implementation of the Framework.

7. For chemicals monitoring and surveillance data, among the 68 countries that responded to the survey, 17 reported having an active national biomonitoring and/or surveillance system. Of those 17 countries, 13 indicated that the data were accessible to health partners and stakeholders and disaggregated by sex. In addition, results from the World Health Organization5 show that, in most countries with available data (173 of 185 countries),6 mortality rates from unintentional poisoning are higher among males than females, although the magnitude of the difference varies among countries. These findings enable the identification of sex-based differences in mortality outcomes and support the monitoring of trends and progress over time, as is indicated in the following figure.

Global mortality rate from unintentional poisoning



Source: Based on the World Health Organization data page "Mortality rate from unintentional poisoning (per 100,000 population)" (updated 8 Jan. 2024). Available at https://data.who.int/indicators/i/55CF708/84FD3DE.

8. For sustainable solutions and safer alternatives, only 3 of 55 private sector respondents to the survey reported integrating gender-responsive criteria into their research and investment processes to ensure that alternatives are safer for diverse biological profiles. Almost half (23) of the private sector respondents reported that they had formally committed to, or were working towards, the substitution of at least one priority harmful substance or group of substances in a major product line or in high-volume use with a safer, more sustainable alternative. However, only 3 reported that their substitution policy or process required a gender impact assessment. Of the 144 non-government respondents, 50 reported that they already had or were developing a procurement policy or programme

[2] Information about those events can be found at https://www.unep.org/global-framework-chemicals/implementation/gender-action.

[3] See documents UNEP/GFC/IC.1/3 and UNEP/GFC/IC.1/INF/3.

[4] Among the responses received, 68 were from national Governments, 55 from private sector entities, 43 from non-governmental organizations, 30 from respondents identifying as "Other," and smaller numbers from industry associations, intergovernmental organizations, trade unions, research and academic institutions, and health-focused non-governmental organizations.

[5] World Health Organization, "Mortality rate from unintentional poisoning (per 100,000 population)" (updated 8 Jan. 2024). Available at https://data.who.int/indicators/i/55CF708/84FD3DE.

[6] Average over the period 2015–2021.

with explicit criteria to avoid or minimize harmful substances and to favour safer and more sustainable alternatives. Among those respondents, 22 reported that the policy or programme was gender-responsive.

9. On policy synergies and linkages, Governments were invited to report on the integration of human rights considerations into chemicals and waste management approaches.[7] Among the 68 responding Governments, 28 reported integrating human rights considerations and 14 reported partial integration.

10. Indicative results suggest that the integration of gender considerations is practised but remains limited and inconsistent. Where biomonitoring systems are present, sex-disaggregated data are collected; however, relatively few countries reported having such systems in place. Among private sector respondents, gender-responsive approaches appeared to be embedded only rarely in research and innovation, substitution processes and sustainable procurement policies. While the available findings from the survey are based on a limited number of responses, they indicate the potential to strengthen the integration of gender considerations across chemicals and waste management policies, programmes and corporate practices. This may include clearer guidance, enhance reporting practices and strengthen capacity to support the collection and use of sex-disaggregated data and gender-responsive decision-making.

IV. Suggested action by the International Conference

11. The International Conference may wish to consider the information before it, including the draft gender action plan set out in annex I, and adopt a resolution along the lines of the text contained in annex II.

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[7] The question was posed only to Governments.

Annex I

Draft gender action plan of the Global Framework on Chemicals

I. Introduction

1. Gender equality is fundamental to achieving sustainable development, including the safe and sustainable management of chemicals and waste. Sustainable Development Goal 5 explicitly calls for achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. In its agreed conclusions 1997/2, the Economic and Social Council called for mainstreaming a gender perspective into all policies and programmes in the United Nations system, and in its resolution 2012/24, the Council welcomed the development of the United Nations System-wide Action Plan on Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. Furthermore, the United Nations Environment Assembly, in resolution 4/17, emphasized the importance of promoting gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of women and girls in environmental governance. In that resolution, the Assembly stressed the need for gender-responsive[1] policies and measures that foster women's full participation in environmental decision-making. Those conclusions and resolutions demonstrate that such approaches are critical to addressing systemic inequalities – including disparities in chemical exposure, occupational hazards and environmental health risks.

2. The Global Framework on Chemicals – for a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste, adopted at the Fifth International Conference on Chemicals Management, embeds gender equality as a fundamental principle in chemical safety and pollution prevention. In addition, it highlights the importance of the collection of data, disaggregated by sex, age and other demographic factors, on chemical exposure to better assess and mitigate disproportionate health and environmental impacts on different groups. Those impacts are not experienced uniformly, as risks from chemicals and waste are also shaped by occupation, socioeconomic status, disability and migration status, with informal and marginalized groups often facing the highest levels of exposure. By integrating gender considerations into policy design, implementation and monitoring, the Framework ensures that chemical safety strategies are inclusive, equitable and effective.

3. The gender action plan for the Framework builds on existing gender mainstreaming efforts in international chemicals and waste processes, identifying gaps and opportunities to strengthen gender integration across the five strategic objectives of the Framework. By promoting gender-responsive approaches – from risk assessment and regulatory frameworks to capacity-building and stakeholder engagement – the present action plan seeks to contribute to a planet free of harm from chemicals and waste, where no one is disproportionately affected because of their gender. Through targeted actions, the gender action plan will support the advancement of gender equality while safeguarding human health and the environment for present and future generations.

II. Vision

4. The vision of the gender action plan is to advance towards full, equal and meaningful participation by all women in decision-making, and to promote gender-responsive policies and mainstreaming a gender perspective in the implementation of the Global Framework on Chemicals. Through the promotion of gender-responsive policies, equitable participation and targeted actions, the gender action plan is aimed at contributing to a planet free of harm from chemicals and waste – where no individual faces disproportionate risks or barriers owing to gender.

III. Objectives

5. On the basis of existing gender action plans, relevant information, gender analyses, stakeholder feedback and best practices, effective gender mainstreaming in the Framework requires:

[1] Gender-responsive approaches "explicitly take gender equality into account, for example through research, data collection, analyses, consultation and other processes". They require "consistent and systematic attention to gender-based differences and inequalities between women and men", addressing both structural constraints and the underlying causes of gender inequality, discrimination and exclusion. Gender-responsive processes and outcomes include laws, policies, programmes and services that are "formulated, planned and delivered in a manner that facilitates the achievement of gender equality" (UN-Women, *Handbook on Gender Mainstreaming for Gender Equality Results* (2022)).

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(a) Robust scientific knowledge and data disaggregated by gender[2] and sex;[3]

(b) Capacity-building and gender-responsive education;

(c) Gender-responsive policy development, including laws, regulations and institutional frameworks;

(d) Multi-stakeholder engagement and gender-inclusive leadership at all levels, taking action to secure the full participation of women in decision-making;

(e) Gender mainstreaming in strategic planning, monitoring and evaluation;

(f) Intersectional approaches in the implementation of the gender action plan;[4]

(g) Human rights-based approaches;

(h) Health and safety policies that address gendered exposure to risks and harmful chemicals, including in informal sectors;

(i) Transparent communication and accountability mechanisms.

6. To ensure coherence and systematic gender integration across the implementation of the Framework, the gender action plan is structured around five goals, which correspond to the five strategic objectives of the Framework:[5]

(a) Gender-inclusive legal frameworks, institutional mechanisms and capacities are in place to support and achieve the safe and sustainable management of chemicals throughout their life cycle;

(b) Gender- and sex-disaggregated knowledge, data and information are generated, available and accessible to all to enable informed decisions and actions;

(c) Gender-responsive approaches are integrated into the processes of identifying, prioritizing and addressing issues of concern;

(d) Safer alternatives and innovative and sustainable solutions in product value chains are in place so that benefits to human health and the environment are gender-equal, while gender-differentiated risks are prevented or minimized;

(e) Enhanced integration of gender perspectives occurs throughout the implementation of the Framework, including in gender-responsive resource mobilization, partnerships, cooperation, capacity-building, and integration into all relevant decision-making processes;

[2] Gender-disaggregated data can be confused with data disaggregated by sex. Biological sex tends not to include the socially constructed power relations and gender norms that exist between men, women, and people with other gender identities, ignoring existing cultural and systemic disparities. Gender power relations significantly influence data collection efforts, health-seeking behaviours, vulnerability to risk factors for non-communicable and other diseases, and the impact of health policies. Gender-disaggregated data ask the "who" questions: Who does which tasks? Who has higher prevalence of a particular disease? This helps to understand the root causes of gender inequalities. Gender-disaggregated data are important to identify exposure routes. (*Source:* Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Gender Equity Unit, "Differences between sex disaggregated data and gendered health data" (2024). Available at https://genderhealthdata.org/resource/differences-between-sex-disaggregated-data-and-gendered-health-data/.)

[3] Sex-disaggregated data are "typically collected and analyzed in two biological categories: males and females, and then used to develop programs and policies… Sex-disaggregated health data tells you the numbers of men and women affected by a particular disease, condition, or cause of death" (Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health Gender Equity Unit, "Differences between sex disaggregated data and gendered health data" (2024)). For example, human biomonitoring data are often disaggregated by sex for comparing population exposures between the sexes. "When data is not disaggregated by sex, it is more difficult to identify real and potential inequalities" (United Nations Children's Fund, Regional Office for South Asia, "Glossary of terms and concepts" (2017), available at https://www.unicef.org/asia-pacific/media/10266/file/Gender%20glossary%20of%20terms%20and%20concepts%20.pdf).

[4] Inequalities are not the outcome of a single, distinct factor such as gender, but rather the result of intersections of differing factors, such as age, disability, ethnicity, race, religion, refugee or migration status, class and other political, economic, cultural and environmental factors and identities. Based on an intersectional lens, the gender action plan of the Global Framework on Chemicals offers a means to understand and respond to the ways in which gender interacts with different factors, This approach thereby enhances awareness of the multidimensional realities of diverse groups, and eventually tackles the structural inequalities associated with gender-based inequalities.

[5] https://www.chemicalsframework.org/page/strategic-objectives-and-targets.

7. Owing to its cross-cutting nature, the gender action plan is designed so that the secretariat, Governments and all stakeholders are accountable for its implementation, as appropriate, thus demonstrating their shared commitment to achieving gender equality in the implementation of the Framework.

IV. Gender mainstreaming

8. For gender mainstreaming, it is important to understand how the Framework will be able to deliver results that reflect its gender mandate effectively and completely.

9. While the Framework defines the ambition for gender mainstreaming, changes at the implementation level are driven through programmes, alliances and partnerships. Those efforts are further translated into action at the micro level – by local authorities, businesses and communities – to generate impact and foster behavioural change.

V. Resource mobilization

10. Funding for the integration of gender-responsive approaches into chemicals management will need to draw on a variety of sources, including national budgets and development plans, private sector investment, international cooperation and targeted opportunities within existing global funds, such as the Global Framework on Chemicals Fund for the Global Framework on Chemicals and the Global Environment Facility. Partnerships with United Nations entities (e.g. UN-Women), international initiatives on gender and health and on occupational health and safety, and philanthropic foundations can provide additional support to sustain action.

Draft gender action plan of the Global Framework on Chemicals

Outputs/ priority actions	*Primary responsible actors*	*Secondary/ supporting actors*	*Indicators of achievement*	*Means of verification, monitoring and evaluation*	*Timeline*	*Priority*
Objective (a): Gender-inclusive legal frameworks, institutional mechanisms and capacities are in place to support and achieve the safe and sustainable management of chemicals throughout their life cycle (corresponding to GFC strategic objective A). *Outcome: National laws, regulations and institutional mechanisms integrate considerations related to gender and at-risk populations (including women, informal workers, Indigenous Peoples, migrants, young people, persons with disabilities, and reproductive-age populations) to reduce disproportionate exposure to chemicals and waste.*						
(a) 1. Develop gender-responsive regulatory frameworks and policies on chemicals and waste management, ensuring the integration of gender-responsive approaches into national strategies and policies	Governments	GFC secretariat, IOMC organizations, OHCHR, IP1, IGOs	Number of adopted chemicals and waste-related laws/regulations that include provisions on gender/at-risk populations[a] % reduction in documented cases of disproportion-ate exposure (e.g. women workers, informal recyclers)	National legislation, inspection guidelines, inspection reports (disaggregated by gender/at-risk status)	Ongoing	High
(a) 2. Strengthen stakeholders' and decision makers' capacities to integrate considerations related to gender and at-risk populations into chemicals policy	Governments, training institutions, universities, professional associations	NGOs, women's organizations, workers' organi-zations, IOMC organizations, OHCHR, IP1	Number of decision makers trained in the integra-tion of gender considerations into laws, regulations and policies on chemicals and waste management	Training reports, policy drafts	Short to medium term	High

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Outputs/ priority actions	*Primary responsible actors*	*Secondary/ supporting actors*	*Indicators of achievement*	*Means of verification, monitoring and evaluation*	*Timeline*	*Priority*
			Number of chemicals and waste-related policy/legal drafts referring to considerations related to gender/at-risk populations			
(a) 3. Promote self-compliance mechanisms in enterprises and workplaces to reduce risks related to gender and at-risk populations	Private sector	Governments, employer associations, trade unions, ILO, NGOs, IP1, IP2	Number of self-compliance mechanisms in place fostering gender equality Number of enterprises with chemical safety policies that are responsive to gender/at-risk populations Numbers of enterprises with documented practices related to gender/at-risk populations (e.g. PPE fit, reproductive protection) Number of reported cases of exposure among at-risk populations in high-impact sectors	Labour inspection reports, workplace audits, worker surveys	Ongoing	High
Objective (b): Gender- and sex-disaggregated knowledge, data and information are generated, available and accessible to all to enable informed decisions and actions (corresponding to GFC strategic objective B). *Outcome: Governments and stakeholders systematically generate, report and use data disaggregated by gender and at-risk status to inform chemicals policy, risk management and sectoral interventions.*						
(b) 1. Report data disaggregated by gender, sex and at-risk status on the relevant indicators for the measurability framework throughout GFC implementation.	Governments, IOMC organizations, open-ended ad hoc group on measura-bility and indicators, IPs, industry associations, private sector, NGOs	GFC secretariat	Sex-disaggregated data reported on relevant indicators for the measurability framework	Data reporting for the measurability structure	Ongoing	High

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Outputs/ priority actions	*Primary responsible actors*	*Secondary/ supporting actors*	*Indicators of achievement*	*Means of verification, monitoring and evaluation*	*Timeline*	*Priority*
(b) 2. Translate disaggregated data into evidence products (e.g. policy briefs, sector analyses, fact sheets) and make them accessible to policymakers, industry and communities	Governments, academia, civil society	Private sector, ISP-CWP, GFC secretariat, IOMC organizations	Number of evidence products produced/ disseminated Number of national or sectoral policies, regulations and industry standards that reference or align with findings from those evidence products	Published briefs, policy reviews, regulations, industry standards	Ongoing	Medium
(b) 3. Collect baseline information related to the differentiated exposure pathways and health impacts of chemicals and waste on different genders and populations, in both the occupa-tional and household contexts	GFC secretariat, ISP-CWP, IOMC organizations	Governments, private sector, academia, NGOs, IPs	Surveys produced and disseminated Baseline survey report	Baseline available	Short and medium term	Medium
Objective (c): Gender-responsive approaches are integrated into the processes of identifying, prioritizing and addressing issues of concern (corresponding to GFC strategic objective C). *Outcome: Processes related to issues of concern systematically integrate gender and at-risk population analysis, which leads to targeted measures addressing disproportionate exposure.*						
(c) 1. Integrate gender considera-tions into the processes of identifying, prioritizing and addressing issues of concern, including in the planning and implementation of programmes and projects	Governments, IOMC organizations, NGOs, civil society	GFC secretariat	Number of issues of concern that include gender/at-risk population analysis Number of adverse health outcomes among women and at-risk groups in sectors affected by identified issues of concern Number of projects/ initiatives addressing issues of concern that integrate gender-	Submissions of issues of concern, labour inspectorate reports, occupational health surveillance, national health data.	Ongoing	High

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Outputs/ priority actions	*Primary responsible actors*	*Secondary/ supporting actors*	*Indicators of achievement*	*Means of verification, monitoring and evaluation*	*Timeline*	*Priority*
			responsive approaches			
Objective (d): Safer alternatives and innovative and sustainable solutions in product value chains are in place so that benefits to human health and the environment are gender-equal, while gender-differentiated risks are prevented or minimized (corresponding to GFC strategic objective D). *Outcome: Safer alternatives and innovations explicitly address factors related to gender and at-risk populations, ensuring equitable benefits and reduced risks in workplaces, products and value chains.*						
(d) 1. Ensure that safer chemical alternatives and innovations in product value chains are designed, tested and adopted in ways that reduce gender-differentiated risks and benefit women and at-risk populations	Private sector, governments, research institutions, ISP-CWP, IP2	NGOs, IOMC organizations, GFC secretariat	Number of safer alternatives with evidence of benefits for women or at-risk groups (e.g., reduced reproductive toxicity, safer PPE fit, elimination of hazardous tasks)	Industry corporate social responsibility/ sustainability reports; government approval dossiers and regulatory filings; NGO/ academic research publications; sectoral standards or certification schemes	Medium	Medium
(d) 2. Promote research and equitable access to information on safer alternatives for women and children, workers, consumers, and at-risk populations	Governments, private sector, consumer organizations, ISP-CWP, IP2	NGOs, GFC secretariat, women's groups, children and youth groups, IGOs	Number of research projects on gender-specific occupational and health inequalities because of exposure to chemicals and waste Number of enterprises introducing gender-responsive labels or safety data Number of outreach/ awareness initiatives on safer alterna-tives and innovations in product value chains targeting women/at-risk groups	Product labelling and safety data sheets; consumer protection authority reports; NGO/industry awareness campaign documentation	Ongoing	Medium

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Outputs/ priority actions	*Primary responsible actors*	*Secondary/ supporting actors*	*Indicators of achievement*	*Means of verification, monitoring and evaluation*	*Timeline*	*Priority*
Objective (e): Enhanced integration of gender perspectives occurs throughout GFC implementation, including in gender-responsive resource mobilization, partnerships, cooperation, capacity-building, and integration into all relevant decision-making processes (corresponding to GFC strategic objective E). *Outcome: Considerations related to gender and at-risk populations are systematically embedded across GFC governance, financing, partnerships and participation.*						
(e) 1. Enhance capacity regarding gender main-streaming in resource mobilization, partnerships, cooperation, capacity-building, and decision-making processes throughout GFC implementation	Governments, IOMC organizations, partnerships, IPs, finance sector	GFC secretariat, IGOs, civil society	% of projects approved by GFC Fund with gender-responsive components % increase in allocation of funding and resources for gender mainstreaming	GFC Fund reports, secretariat tracking	Ongoing	High
(e) 2. Assign gender focal points and strengthen collaboration with multilateral environmental agreements/ United Nations entities and existing partnerships	Governments, IPs, multi-lateral envi-ronmental agreements	GFC secretariat, IOMC organizations, civil society	Number of gender focal points appointed Number of joint activities with multi-lateral environmental agreements/ United Nations agencies that include gender outcomes	Focal point lists, joint reports, GFC progress reports	Immediate	High
(e) 3. Ensure gender-responsive representation and leadership in the implementation of the Framework and gender-balanced representation in decision-making processes	Governments, GFC secre-tariat, IPs	Civil society organizations, academia, children and youth groups	% of women/ at-risk groups in GFC delegations and leadership roles % of women serving as co-chairs/ facilitators in intersessional bodies Number of documented cases of integration of gender into decisions by diverse leadership	Participant lists, leadership records, meeting reports	Immediate – ongoing	High
(e) 4. Raise awareness of gender-responsive chemical policies, gender-specific chemical risks and sustainable solutions, including through	Governments, IGOs, NGOs, private sector, civil society	Academia, GFC secretariat, IPs	Number of communicatio n and outreach campaigns, capacity-building and educational events organized	Communication products, event records, press release, etc.	Ongoing	High

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Outputs/ priority actions	*Primary responsible actors*	*Secondary/ supporting actors*	*Indicators of achievement*	*Means of verification, monitoring and evaluation*	*Timeline*	*Priority*
communication campaigns, education and public participation						

Abbreviations: GFC – Global Framework on Chemicals; IGO – intergovernmental organizations; ILO – International Labour Organization; IOMC – Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals; IP – implementation programme; ISP-CWP – Intergovernmental Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution; NGO – non-governmental organization; OHCHR – Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights; PPE – personal protective equipment.

[a] At-risk populations include women, informal workers, Indigenous Peoples and migrants.

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Annex II

Draft decision GFC-1/[--]: Global Framework on Chemicals gender action plan

The International Conference,

Recalling General Assembly resolution 70/219 of 22 December 2015, in which the Assembly called on Member States to ensure the full and equal participation of women in decision-making and in the formal economy and encouraged Member States and the United Nations system to promote an active and visible policy of mainstreaming a gender perspective in all policies and programmes,

Recalling also United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 4/17 of 15 March 2019 on promoting gender equality and the human rights and empowerment of women and girls in environmental governance,

Emphasizing the importance of gender mainstreaming for further promoting gender equality and the rights and empowerment of all women and girls to ensure the effective implementation of the Global Framework on Chemicals – for a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste, and the need to address the gender-differentiated impacts of chemical exposure,

Guided by the principles and approaches mentioned in section IV of the Global Framework on Chemicals,

1. *Welcomes* the gender action plan of the Global Framework on Chemicals – for a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste;[1]

2. *Invites* stakeholders to carry out activities to implement the gender action plan during the triennium 2027–2029 and to report on progress towards the relevant targets and indicators, as appropriate, and to share with the secretariat their related experiences and good practices, including information on promoting gender equality in all aspects of the implementation of the Framework;

3. *Requests* the secretariat to carry out activities during the triennium 2027–2029, subject to the availability of resources, to support the implementation of the gender action plan.

[1] UNEP/GFC/IC.1/7, annex I.

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