



Agenda item 3 (b) - OHCHR Statement at the first meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) for the Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC)

Check against delivery

Thank you, Chair.

While pesticides have played an important role in global agriculture, their unsound management has far-reaching implications for human rights, health, the environment and food security by compromising the nutritional quality, safety, and overall integrity of food.

Some pesticides are so dangerous that they cannot be used safely under any circumstances, with severe, and in many cases well-documented, health risks associated with pesticide exposure, ranging from acute poisoning and suicide to long-term issues such as cancer, neurological disorders, and reproductive health impacts.

The far-reaching implications of the unsound management of pesticides remains largely invisible, disproportionately impacting children, pregnant women, peasants and rural workers, including migrant workers and temporary workers, and Indigenous Peoples, among others. Pesticides also contaminate the broader public – you, me, and our families - through food, water, and the environment, causing widespread, non-consensual exposure.

HHPs are a deep systemic failure and a human rights violation. We should call it for what it is.

Hunger is just as much about distribution of food as it is about supply. Despite the risks associated with the use of pesticides, it has been commonly argued that they are necessary to increase yields to feed the growing world population. But at what and whose cost? What are the alternatives available, accessible and affordable, to feed the world in a healthier and more sustainable way? What are the barriers preventing sustainable ecological alternatives to thrive?

Agrichemical imposed narratives often present chemical-dependent, industrial agriculture as the only solution, dismissing agroecological alternatives and deepening peasant dependency through seed-pesticide-fertilizer packages, which is contrary to food sovereignty. Narratives “blaming the farmer” for the “misuse” of pesticides must be challenged as safe use is often impossible due to systemic barriers such as poverty, lack of training, and toxic nature of products.

Human rights-based solutions include scaling up proven agroecological alternatives to replace pesticides, phasing out of HPPs, supporting the implementation of global chemical safety strategies, concrete action at the local level – informed by the rights to participation, access to information and access to justice in environmental matters, including tracking pesticide exposure, supporting farmers, and a regulatory framework to prevent industry having undue influence over regulatory processes.

We must also address the injustice of pesticides banned in certain countries being exported to other countries, and strengthen institutional capacity in importing countries, not only to regulate pesticides effectively, but to hold agrochemical corporations accountable.

OHCHR welcomes the creation of the Global Alliance on HHP and stands ready to continue supporting global efforts to address HHPs globally.

Thank you, Chair.