
Intervention by the Children and Youth Major Group on Agenda Item 3(a) - Towards a Pollution Free Planet related programmes

10th Annual Subcommittee meeting of the Committee of Permanent
Representatives from 20 - 24 November 2023

Thank you for the floor, Chair. My name is Shannon Lisa on behalf of the Children and Youth Major Group (CYMG) and the Chemicals and Waste Youth Platform (CWYP).

The management, funding and policy priority given to chemicals and waste have, for many decades, not matched the ambition and focus seen within climate change, biodiversity and other interconnected environmental challenges. Moving in a positive direction, however, there have been significant strides in 2023, making it a landmark year for advancing policy and action within the thematic of “Towards a Pollution Free Planet.”

We celebrate the progress this year from some pivotal agreements achieved at the BRS and Minamata COPs to the newly adopted Global Framework on Chemicals, to the invigorated campaigns of BeatPollution and the International Day of Zero Waste. In parallel with these processes, the children and youth constituency has been strengthening its collaboration with UNEP, the Secretariats of the chemicals MEAs and broader chemicals policymaking bodies to amplify youth rights and perspectives in chemicals governance.

Why have we considered children and youth to be a “missing piece” to effective chemicals management?

- First, we know that youth experience more severe and, in many cases, irreversible, risks to their health and development from hazardous chemicals and wastes.
- Second, a majority of the thousands of chemicals used and disposed of have never been comprehensively studied for their impacts on human health, especially the health of children and adolescents.
- Further, we highlight that many countries in the Global South facing the greatest challenges to chemicals and waste management also tend to have the largest proportion of youth in their populations

Notably, these risks have not translated to coordinated strategies specifically focused on protecting the health and rights of children and youth from toxic exposures.

Youth constituencies have initiated the following programmes this year to strengthen youth engagement in the UN chemicals, waste and pollution portfolio:

- Organized a Global Youth Event for the first UN International Day of Zero Waste;



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- Mobilized the first youth delegations to the SAICM intersessional meetings and ICCM; BRS and Minamata COPs, Open-Ended Working Group meetings towards developing a Science-Policy Panel on chemicals, waste and pollution prevention; and convened a Global Youth Coalition on Plastic Pollution to facilitate broad youth engagement in the INC process;
- Launched an inaugural full-day **Youth Forum on Chemicals Governance** as a formally-recognized special event of ICCM5, and delivered youth priorities and perspectives on chemicals and waste management in a **Global Youth Declaration** presented during the ICCM5 High-Level Segment.

Looking toward 2024, and with critical preparations underway for UNEA-6, UNGA-79 and the Summit of the Future, we must meet the moment of these high-level events to strengthen coordination on all the thematic programmes of UNEP, including chemicals, waste and pollution. We further welcome the development of the **UN Common Approach to Pollution** as a UN-wide commitment to mainstream the management of chemicals, waste and pollution in its policies. We call for the implementation plan of the Common Approach to incorporate the perspectives of youth and other rights-holder groups, and we emphasize the role of the Environment Management Group in fostering collaboration and coherence among UN agencies in addressing our most pressing environmental challenges.

Thank you, Chair, for the floor.

Delivered By:

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