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United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme

United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme
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and 28 February–2 March 2022*

Draft resolution on the sound management of chemicals and waste**

Submission by Switzerland

The United Nations Environment Assembly

Recognising that the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals is threatened by an array of escalating and mutually reinforcing environmental risks, described in "Making Peace with Nature", and that given the interconnected nature of climate change, loss of biodiversity, land degradation, and air and water pollution, it is essential that these problems are tackled together,

Emphasizing again the cross-cutting relevance of the sound management of chemicals and waste to many of the goals and targets of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including in particular those on health, and the close links with mitigating and adapting to climate change, protecting biodiversity,

Noting the decision of the Human Rights Council recognising the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right that is important for the enjoyment of human rights[1], and recognising that action on pollution from chemicals and waste is central to achieving this,

Welcoming the progress which has been made, through the work of the United Nations Environment Programme and other UN agencies, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, and the relevant multilateral environmental agreements,

Expressing great concern that chemicals and waste are not yet managed in ways which minimise harm to human health and the environment and aware that the use of chemicals and the amount of waste generated will grow substantially over the coming years,

Recognising the need for urgent and more ambitious action by all to establish an effective, holistic and enabling global framework to promote the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, and to implement practical steps to promote sound management,

* In accordance with the decisions taken by the Bureau of the United Nations Environment Assembly at its meeting held on 8 October 2020 and by the bureaux of the United Nations Environment Assembly and the Committee of Permanent Representatives at their joint meeting held on 1 December 2020, the fifth session of the Environment Assembly was adjourned on 23 February 2021 and is expected to resume as an in-person meeting in February 2022.

** The present document has not been formally edited.

[1] A/HRC/48/L.23/Rev.1.

Convinced of the need to address urgently issues of concern which have been identified as needing a coordinated international response, in particular lead, cadmium and arsenic,

Taking into account the medium-term strategy of the United Nations Environment Programme, which includes action on chemicals and pollution along with action on climate and on nature as the three interconnected thematic, foundational and enabling programmes for the United Nations Environment Programme,[2]

The Sound Management of Chemicals and Wastes, and the International Conference on Chemicals Management

Notes with concern that the target set by the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development - to achieve by 2020 the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and to significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment[3] - has not been met, and commits to maintaining the integrity of the 2030 Agenda by raising the ambition and ensuring continuous action by redoubling efforts to achieve this targets in an accelerated time frame, reflecting the urgency conveyed in the Agenda.

Calls on Governments, the private sector and in particular manufacturers and users of chemicals, non-governmental public health and environmental organizations, trade unions, academic institutions, and other civil society organizations to put in place a comprehensive and ambitious new instrument to promote and support the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, including effective means of implementation, at the fifth meeting of the International Conference on Chemical Management, and calls on all stakeholders to find creative and flexible ways of making progress during the current pandemic to bring the negotiation to a successful conclusion.

Recognises the need for all relevant stakeholders and sectors to be fully engaged in the development and implementation of the new instrument, and the need to address the management of chemicals and waste in a holistic manner reflecting a life-cycle approach and the need to achieve sustainable consumption and production.

Invites all the organizations represented on the Interorganizational Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, other relevant UN agencies and Multilateral Environmental Agreements to play a full part in the consultations in preparing the new instrument, and in its future implementation, in line with their respective mandates.

Requests the Executive Director to continue and strengthen support for the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management in preparing for the fifth meeting of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, and to provide effective secretariat support for a new instrument agreed by the Conference, subject to any decision of the Conference.

The Integrated Approach to Financing, and one-time extension of the duration of the Special Programme

Reaffirms the relevance and importance of the integrated approach to financing of the sound management of chemicals and wastes, and underscores that the three components of an integrated approach - mainstreaming, industry involvement and dedicated external finance - are mutually reinforcing and are all important for the financing of the sound management of chemicals and waste at all levels.

Welcomes the significant role played by the Global Environment Facility (GEF) and requests its Council to continue and enhance its support for the sound management of chemicals and waste, in particular through its role as the financial mechanism for the Stockholm Convention and as part of the financial mechanism of the Minamata Convention.

Welcomes also continuing and enhanced support from the GEF for the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

Recalls resolution 1/5 of the United Nations Environment Assembly, which adopted the terms of reference for the Special Programme to support institutional strengthening at the national level to enhance the implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, the Minamata Convention and Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management.

[2] UNEP/EA.5/3/Rev.1.

[3] Sustainable Development Goal 12.4.

Welcomes the mid-term evaluation conducted by the Evaluation Office of the United Nations Environment Programme in 2019 which, among other things, accorded the Special Programme an overall rating of 'satisfactory' with regards its performance to date.

Takes note of the document prepared by the Secretariat describing the future added value of the Special Programme.[4]

Also notes of the recommendation of the Executive Board of the Special Programme adopted at its sixth resumed meeting in September 2021 to extend the duration of the Programme by five years, and to include the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 in the Programme.[5]

Further notes that the Special Programme plays an important role in supporting developing countries, taking into account the special needs of least developed countries and small island developing States, as well as countries with economies in transition, with priority given to those with least capacity, in establishing and maintaining the sustainable national capacity for sound management of chemicals and waste,

Encourages Governments in a position to do so, as well as the private sector, including industry, foundations, other nongovernment organisations and other stakeholders, to mobilise and continue mobilising financial resources to contribute to the Special Programme,

Decides to extend the duration of the Special Programme for a period of five years, in accordance with paragraph 24 of the Terms of Reference set out under resolution 1/5, and to include the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020 in the Programme.

Issues of concern

Welcomes the several reports prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme in response to requests made at the third and fourth meetings of the Assembly, which provide an important contribution towards the sound management of chemicals and waste.[6]

Notes in particular the report "An Assessment Report on Issues of Concern" on specific substances or groups of substances where emerging evidence indicates a risk to human health and the environment, and notes with concern that although progress has been made the global action to address these issues has not been sufficient, and urges all Member States and other stakeholders to take further action to reduce or eliminate the risks associated with these issues of concern including coordinated and holistic international action.

Requests in particular the Executive Director to prepare a report identifying and assessing possible international actions to address the issues of concerns discussed in the "Assessment Report on Issues of Concern" and particularly the significant risks posed by pollution by lead, cadmium and arsenic, building on existing measures and initiatives, in consultation with other international organisations and instruments, Member States, and stakeholders.

Also notes that the report on "the environmental and health impacts of pesticides and fertilizers and ways of minimizing them" concludes that the adverse impacts will increase unless fundamental change takes place, and urges international organisations, Member States, and other stakeholders to address the issues raised by the report.

Requests to the Executive Director

Requests the Executive Director to work closely with the other members of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, other relevant UN Organizations and other relevant UN organizations and instruments, and with the relevant multilateral environmental agreements, to ensure effective cooperation and coordination in promoting the sound management of chemicals and waste.

Requests the Executive Director to continue to support the implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata Conventions, in particular through the implementation of activities where the support of UNEP is requested by the Conferences of the Parties of those conventions.

[4] https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/36950/SP_EB6_7.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y.

[5] https://wedocs.unep.org/xmlui/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/36902/FRAEBSP.pdf.

[6] Available at https://www.unep.org/resources/report/chemicals-andwaste-reports-unea-5.

Requests the Executive Director to report to the United Nations Environment Assembly at its sixth session on the implementation of the present resolution and on the implementation of the programme of work with respect to chemicals and waste.