

Response from the International Panel on Chemical Pollution, IPCP 6 June 2023

Operating Principles Governing the Work of the Panel

Request for Written Submissions from Member States and Relevant Stakeholders

Member states, during the resumed first session of the Open-ended Working Group (OEWG1.2), requested the Secretariat of the OEWG to solicit written submissions from Member States and relevant stakeholders regarding the operating principles governing the work of the panel.

In support of this request, the Secretariat conducted a webinar (on 26 April 2023) dedicated to the issue of operating principles. In advance of the webinar, the Secretariat released a background document which provides a comparative overview of operating principles of relevant, existing science-policy panels (IPCC, IPBES, IRP and GEO-7). The recording of the webinar can be found on [this website](#), when available, and the background document is available at [this link](#).

A variety of potential operating principles are presented below, based on the analysis performed for this [background document](#). The following questions in no way attempt to rank or preclude consideration of the operating principles of the future SPP, rather, they draw from the agreed text of Resolution 5/8 and other existing, relevant science-policy bodies, as well as the discussions at the OEWG. You may also suggest relevant potential operating principles that have not been identified yet.

Member States are invited to provide submissions through their respective national focal points (list of focal points available [at this link](#)). Non-government stakeholders are invited to submit their submissions on behalf of their organization or group. You are invited to respond to all or some of the questions below. Once complete, please submit this filled document to SPP-CWP@un.org. All submissions will be uploaded online and will inform a working document to be considered at OEWG 2.

The following elements are included in Resolution 5/8. Please indicate by clicking on the box(es) where you believe these elements should be included (i.e., operating principles, rules of procedure, guidelines, or other relevant documents, or if they are not relevant). Some key terms have been grouped together for the purpose of this tabular analysis, there is inevitably some overlap across principles.

	Operating Principle	Rules of Procedure	Guidelines	Other	Not relevant
CREDIBILITY					
Robustness/Rigour	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Integrity/Objectivity / Independence/Impartiality/ Lack of Bias (avoiding conflicts of interest)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interdisciplinary / Multidisciplinary / Balance of disciplines	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
RELEVANCE/SALIENCE					

	Operating Principle	Rules of Procedure	Guidelines	Other	Not relevant
Policy-relevant (and not policy prescriptive)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
LEGITIMACY					
Inclusivity/Balance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-- indigenous inclusivity	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-- geographic balance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-- regional balance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-- gender balance	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
-- balance of disciplines (see also Credibility/Interdisciplinary...)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
CROSS-CUTTING THEMES					
Transparency	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Flexibility	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coordination (without duplication) / Complementarity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cost-Effectiveness	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please provide any relevant comments on your choices above:

The following table includes other elements that may be considered. Please indicate by clicking on the box(es) where you believe these elements should be included (i.e., operating principles, rules of procedure, guidelines, or other relevant documents, or if they are not relevant). It is also possible to add additional potential operating principles to be considered.

OTHER	Operating Principle	Rules of Procedure	Guidelines	Other	Not relevant
Promotion of innovation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Comprehensive, holistic, or integrative approach	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Consensus based approach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing accessible outputs	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Others [Precautionary Principle]	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conflict of Interest provisions	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Please provide any relevant comments on your choices above:

Operating Principles: Learning from Previous Practice
Response from the International Panel on Chemical Pollution, IPCP
6 June 2023

1. We are grateful for the opportunity to comment on recommendations for “Operating Principles” that will govern the work of the Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution Prevention, hereafter referred to as the Panel.
2. We appreciate that Operating Principles will be adopted and stand as a statement of overarching principles that are not subject to periodic revision, in contrast to Rules of Procedure and Guidelines.
3. We recommend that the Operating Principles be based on the “best of” those from IPBES, IPCC, IRP and GEO as laid out in the Background document to support discussions on operating principles (26 April 2023).

CREDIBILITY

Robustness/Rigour/Lack of Bias: The credibility of the Panel is predicated on the production and consideration of highly robust and rigorous information. And yet, the Panel must consider that bias towards High-Income Countries is inherent in the base of evidence (due to greater output enabled by higher funding and capacity of the scientific community in High- than Low-Income Countries). GEO includes that “all assessment products are strongly evidence-based and supported by authoritative data and knowledge”. We see that this principle represents a ‘best case’ situation because it does not recognize the bias towards a greater evidence-base in High- than Low-Income countries that is not necessarily commensurate with the magnitude of issues. Further, “evidence” is typically understood to be produced by Western knowledge systems and to disregard other knowledge systems such as Indigenous Learning and Knowledge (ILK). Thus, a call for “robustness/rigour” needs to appreciate these sources of bias and build in counter-balancing mechanisms.

We suggest that mention of “evidence” be accompanied by a statement recognizing the connection to “inclusivity” (as discussed below) because of the bias in the base of evidence. For example, addressing this bias in the base of evidence can be accommodated by a statement welcoming “inputs and suggestions from... relevant stakeholders” (from IPBES, 1a. Function of the Platform). We note that inclusion of such a statement also needs to be tied to strong provisions to guard against Conflict of Interest (COI, discussed below). The other provision to address bias is through inclusivity of knowledge systems and “clear, transparent and scientifically credible processes for the exchange, sharing and use of data, information and technologies from all sources, including non-peer-reviewed literature” (IPBES I1b and c).

The need to consider robust and rigorous evidence should be met while supporting the **precautionary principle**, which should be an overarching principle governing the work of the Panel. As such, the need for robust and rigorous evidence should not supersede the need to

present evidence that points to still incompletely understood, but relevant exposures to or impacts by chemicals or waste.

Integrity/Independence/Lack of Bias should be in the operating principles. We recommend that the requirement for independence be reinforced by the explicit inclusion of Conflict of Interest (COI) provisions, as is done with IRP (4e). The clear enunciation of COI provisions is needed in the guiding principles so that it is a core element of the Panel and not subject to reinterpretation. Clear COI provisions are needed to protect the credibility of the Panel from undue interference brought on by entities with vested interests (especially financial) that aim to influence the outcome of the governing bodies.

RELEVANCE/SALIENCE

We support inclusion of **policy relevance in operating principles**. In addition, the operating principles should follow the example of the IPCC and IRP by allowing for **flexibility** to include scientific, technical and socio-economic factors and evidence needed to assess policy options and solutions.

LEGITIMACY

Indigenous inclusivity: The discussions at OEWG 1.2 led to recognizing the need to include Indigenous and traditional knowledge. The inclusion of Indigenous and traditional knowledge is enshrined in the Operating Principles of IPBES (2d) and we support its inclusion here as Indigenous Peoples and Local communities are often inequitably adversely impacted by issues related to chemical pollution and waste.

Geographic and regional balance: We support the wording taken from IPBES that explicitly recognizes the “need for the full and effective participation of developing countries and balanced regional representation and participation in its structure and work”. (IPBES IIg)

Gender balance: Women continue to be under-represented among government representatives, the scientific community and peer-reviewed publications. As with Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities, women can also bear additional burdens due to chemical pollution and waste. As such, the Operating Principles need to enshrine the goal of gender balance in representation.

Balance of disciplines: This should be included because of the need to use all relevant information from multiple disciplines (natural, social, economic sciences, and other knowledge systems) to understand global issues and policy options. Innovative understandings and policy options can arise at the intersection of disciplines and knowledge systems rather than from conventional thinking. As such, disciplinary inclusion can support the need for innovation.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

Transparency in the activities of and decisions made by the Panel, and also transparency in information considered in assessments is a key element of achieving credibility and is mentioned in the operating principles of several Panels (e.g., IPCC, IPBES IIc). We support including the need for transparency in the Operating Principles, Rules of Procedures and in the Panel’s Guidelines.

Flexibility is needed to adapt to changes in the understanding of issues, the base of evidence, methods of assessment, ways of thinking, and avenues towards developing policy options. It is essential that the Panel keep abreast of rapid changes and not reflect outdated thinking. Flexibility is included in GEO's operating principles (2.3b). Inclusion of flexibility supports the need for innovation.

Coordination/Complementarity is needed to minimize overlap with existing MEAs while giving the Panel the ability to strive for multiple co-benefits. Thus, we support language consistent with GEO's operating principles stating that "it avoids duplication" but also mentions "while addressing interlinkages and cross-cutting issues and identify gaps and emerging issues" (2.3f). We suggest that coordination be included in the Panel's guidelines.

Effectiveness, but not necessarily **cost-effectiveness**, should be in the operating principles. By effective, we mean that the Panel must produce documents that align with the scope and function of the Panel. Effectiveness also requires balancing the need for timely assessments with adequately capturing a holistic analysis that reflects interdisciplinary and inclusive participation.

OTHER

Promotion of Innovation: Establishing the Panel is motivated by the threats posed by global change, land degradation, loss of biodiversity and pollution of air, water, sediments, soils and people (Baste and Watson, 2021). Moving the global society out of this emergency is going to require innovative thinking and approaches. Here, we include innovation in assessment methods, prioritization schemes, and developing policy options. As such, we support explicitly calling out the need for innovation within the Operating Principles.

Comprehensive and holistic approach: The need is great to take a comprehensive and holistic view when developing policy-relevant assessments, including assessments of policy options. Taking a comprehensive and holistic approach can avoid producing incomplete and biased assessments. Taking a holistic approach must be supported by inclusivity of participation (e.g., geographic and gender balance) and reliance on multiple knowledge systems (e.g., inclusion of Indigenous and Traditional Knowledge). We note that taking such an approach is challenged by the growing complexity of human systems and their effect on global conditions. Thus, as noted above, the need for taking a comprehensive and holistic approach must be balanced by the need for producing effective, timely assessments.

Consensus-based approach: We do not support the inclusion of a consensus-based approach that could delay or undermine the Panel's activities.

Providing accessible outputs: Should be included in the Operating Principles, Rules of Procedure and Guidelines as this is a component of transparency.