



Input to the meeting OEWG 2, December 2023, for the Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution Prevention from the science community

Authors: Workshop participants at the Uppsala Health Summit 2023, October 24, Uppsala, Sweden (list of names appended below).

Background

At the global level, the United Nations Environment Assembly, at its resumed fifth session (UNEA-5.2) in March 2022, adopted its resolution 5/8 on a Science-Policy Panel, contributing further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution. Since October 2022, negotiations have been ongoing within an ad hoc OEWG to prepare proposals for the SPP, with the ambition of completing the necessary arrangements by the end of 2024. The new SPP is to be established in 2025.

Science is instrumental in generating new knowledge as well as in providing evidence for the awareness-raising and decision-making process that underlines choices for policy and management options, leading to stronger protection of the environment and human health from hazardous chemical pollution.

The Uppsala Health Summit 24-25 October 2023¹ workshop “Towards an Intergovernmental panel on chemicals, waste and pollution”² examined in detail several aspects related to procedures and operating principles that in the eyes of the scientific community will ensure provision of sound and unbiased recommendations and will not delay decision-making processes.

Workshop outcomes

The participants from scientific community and science-policy interface explored which principles should be attended to and which mechanisms and procedures should be carried forward including mobilization of scientific expertise, sufficient inclusion of academia, and identifying and handling stakeholders’ conflicts of interest (COIs). The outcomes of deliberations are presented below building on the experience available from the work of IPCC and IPBES and current challenges in the scientific community.

A central aspect for the set-up and workflow of the new Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste and Pollution Prevention (SPP) is the interaction with the chemical industry. It is of utmost importance that the chemical industry cannot influence the assessments and reports to be developed by the SPP. The chemical industry will be important as a provider of information about chemicals and their uses, but this should be limited to a consultative role. For any involvement of chemical industry representatives or consultants or other experts working for the chemical industry in

¹ <https://www.uppsalahealthsummit.se/>

² Preconference Report from UHS 2023, page 8-11.

https://www.uppsalahealthsummit.se/digitalAssets/1069/c_1069302-1_1-k_uppsala-health-summit-2023-chemical-pollution-and-one-health-preconferencereport.pdf



such a role, strict and effective provisions for the identification of conflicts of interest need to be applied. To establish and maintain the credibility of the SPP, full transparency of the mandates and funding sources of all experts involved in the work of the SPP will have to be ensured.

In addition to the chemical industry, there are many industry branches and business who are downstream users of chemicals, but have not a primary interest in the chemical composition of the products they use and may be important drivers for the transition to alternatives. These industry branches and business should also be represented in the work of the SPP so that a comprehensive understanding of the actual extent to which chemicals are needed to provide certain functions can be obtained.

For the nomination of experts preparing the primary results of the SPP, transparent rules should be established. Contributions by academic scientists from all fields of science and all countries should be possible without complicated procedures. Information and data from the peer-reviewed scientific literature will form a main pillar of the work of the SPP, but other forms of evidence (non-peer reviewed reports created by credible sources) will also have to be considered. Extensive review of all materials and data provided, peer reviewed and non-peer reviewed, should be performed by the experts working for the SPP.

Uncertainties surrounding the data and other materials used by the SPP should be made transparent and the implications of these uncertainties should be addressed in the outcomes of the SPP's work. At the same time, these uncertainties should not prevent the formulation of clear and solid statements of what is known about chemical pollution problems. The SPP needs to avoid "paralysis by analysis".

The SPP should publish outcomes of its work (assessments, reports, policy briefs, etc.) with sufficient frequency, ideally at least one outcome per year.

The SPP should establish formal linkages with the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, IPCC, and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). It should also, where this is pertinent, address the needs of the BRS and Minamata Conventions, the Montreal Protocol, and other Protocol on ODS, and the emerging new legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.

An important need to be addressed by the SPP is to provide information about the composition of products and materials used in various applications and items handled by consumers.

The SPP should strive to go beyond assessments and analyses and also outline options for science-based solutions of chemical pollution problems.



The SPP should disseminate its most important results in a language and format that makes them accessible also to non-experts. This should be used as a basis for an active engagement with different parts of society in different regions of the world.

Conclusions

The authors believe that if the above identified topics are coherently embedded into the SPP set up document, the global community will have laid an independent, efficient and expert framework for the provision of science-based and unbiased recommendations and will not delay decision-making processes strengthening protection of health and environment from the negative impact of chemicals, waste and pollution.

Workshop participants

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