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Remarks for ICCM4 High Level Segment

1 - 2 October 2015, SESSION: ***Multi-sectoral Collaboration For More Efficient Chemicals Management***

Thank you for giving me the chance to speak about the role of civil society and in particular health NGOs in multisectoral collaboration for more efficient chemicals management.

My organisation the Health and Environment Alliance represents health professionals, nonprofit health insurers, doctors, nurses, cancer and asthma groups, and others.

We work to inform and improve environmental policies so they prevent diseases before they start. *After all our health is our wealth.*

Health NGOs have a unique role in multi-sectoral collaboration:

- **We bring the science to the public and the policy-makers:** this ties into what Leo Trasande has just been speaking about, making sure that the latest science on how hazardous chemicals affect our health is available in a timely manner. One notable example is just hot off the press today: The world's largest professional society of doctors who are obstetricians and gynaecologists called FIGO, has just published a special opinion in its peer reviewed journal which urges greater efforts to prevent exposure to toxic chemicals, exposure which they witness firsthand as reproductive health professionals. **"Exposure to toxic environmental chemicals during pregnancy and breastfeeding is ubiquitous and is a threat to healthy human reproduction."**

FIGO notes that the consequences of exposure disproportionately hit people with low incomes, and recommends policies to prevent exposure and reduce the burden on women, children and families. This is an extremely important call from doctors in 125 countries which must NOT be ignored.

- **Facilitating the health sector’s input into chemicals policy decision-making.** In the European region, HEAL engaged in the WHO’s process to define health sector priorities for the 2020 goal; and we participate in the WHO network of reps from health ministries in the 53 countries.
- **Being a watchdog:** We participate in and monitor the policy implementation; and put the spotlight on poor or ineffective actions and processes on toxic chemicals:

One especially pertinent and current example is **Lead in paint**. Will Europe allow a Canadian company to continue using lead pigments in paint, while EU companies have moved out of this? This is completely unacceptable, and if you feel the same, we urge you to say so to the European Commission and its Member States who vote on this soon.

- **Sounding the alert on environmental health threats – raising awareness on the health harms arising from chemical contamination;**

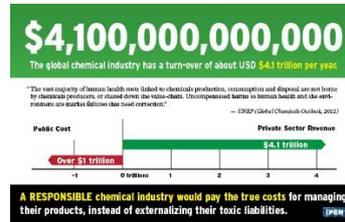
The example here is from one of HEAL’s member organisations, Phyto Victimes in France, which works to assist farmers, their families and bystanders in getting recognition and compensation for their pesticides- induced health injuries, such as certain cancers, Parkinson’s disease. You may have heard about their president in the news last month, Paul Francois, who won his case against Monsanto for its knowing but not declaring the hazardous properties of the product, and which caused him significant neurological disorders. This has been a landmark victory.

VISION FOR FUTURE TOXIC CHEMICALS MANAGEMENT

Looking into the future, we see an urgent need to continue the global discussions and work on chemical management. To us, **a multi-sectoral collaboration for more efficient management of chemicals would look like this:**

1. Some chemicals would NOT be “managed” – because they CANNOT be managed safely. They would be phased out. Lead in paint. Highly hazardous pesticides, edcs, etc.
2. Secondly, the health ministries and health agencies would have enough resources to work equally and jointly with ministries on all chemicals dossiers and participate in final decision-making.

3. Thirdly, we would make better use of the recommendations from scientists and medical professionals when they tell us to minimize exposure because we have serious health problems arising from chemicals like edcs.
4. Lastly, the financial resources for all of this and more could be financed through a global cost recovery scheme which collects a 0.1% fee on the annual turnover of all chemical production worldwide.



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5. This money can then go to the different sectors (health etc) and pay for agreed SAICM activities especially
 - policy changes to phase out the worst hazardous chemicals
 - chemicals management infrastructure & enforcement
 - compensation for health problems
 - remediation of hotspots
 - real alternatives assessment

This is what we think needs to be done. And I hope the outcomes from this meeting take us closer to THIS true efficiency in chemicals management: **avoiding chemicals-induced health harm in the first place.**

