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NGOs Seek Global Alliance for Phase-out of Highly Hazardous Pesticides at International Chemicals Meeting

(Geneva) More than a thousand non-governmental organizations (NGOs) from more than 100 countries called for the creation of a Global Alliance to Phase-out Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) today at the opening session of the world's only forum on international chemical safety.

"In many developing and transition countries, ordinary conditions of pesticide use are a source of significant harm to farmer and ecosystem health. That's why the governing Council of the UN Food and Agricultural Organization called for the progressive ban of HHPs in 2006. However, to this day, HHPs continue to be widely used and there is no comprehensive, international approach to their phase-out," said Olga Speranskaya, IPEN Co-Chair. "It's time for this meeting to take that step."

"The elements are in place for a successful phase-out of HHPs. Safer alternatives to HHPs are available and in use, especially agroecology and ecosystem approaches to pest and weed management. There is broad support internationally for reducing pesticide use and assisting farmers to replace pesticides with agroecology approaches to pest management. A Global Alliance would bring together the broad range of stakeholders (agencies, farmers, scientists, private sector, civil society, etc.) required to raise awareness, share information and build capacity for HHP elimination," said Sarojeni Rengam, Pesticide Action Network (PAN).

Groups called for the Alliance at the 4th International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM4) in Geneva. ICCM is the governing body for the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), the only international forum that addresses global and national issues related to sound chemicals management.

At ICCM3 in 2012, a large number of countries from all UN regions, as well as international agencies and civil society organizations, supported actions on HHPs, including developing a priority list of substances for a progressive ban and substitution with safer alternatives. During the subsequent round of SAICM regional meetings in 2013 and 2014, more than 140 countries reiterated that concern, and called for more information on HHPs that are in use and for more information on safer alternatives. At the ICCM4 preparatory meeting in December 2014, 54 countries of the African Region proposed a Global Alliance to Phase-out Highly Hazardous Pesticides to tackle the issue.

Just prior to ICCM4, UN Member States adopted 17 Sustainable Development Goals ("SDGs"- also called the "Global Goals"). "*Promote sustainable agriculture*" is part of Goal 2 and includes a target to "*ensure sustainable food production systems...that help maintain ecosystems.*" The phase-out of HHPs is intimately linked to achieving this goal. Agroecology is regarded as the basis of sustainable agriculture but countries need assistance and cooperative work to implement it.

At ICCM4, PAN will release its new book "Replacing Chemicals with Biology in Farming: Phasing out Highly Hazardous Pesticides with Agroecology," which provides compelling evidence that ecosystem approaches to pest management, and particularly agroecology, increase yields, particularly in developing countries; increase farm profitability; reduce pesticide use often to zero; improve resilience to climate change including to floods, droughts and hurricanes; improve food security and food sovereignty; and can provide greater benefits to women farmers.

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Highly Hazardous Pesticides – two

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