

29 September, 2015

IPEN Intervention on International Cooperation on Chemical Safety Beyond 2020

Dear Mr. President,

I'm speaking on behalf of IPEN, a global network of civil society organizations, and its participating organization in Belarus – Center for Environmental Solutions.

SAICM is the only global forum where the full range of issues relating to sound chemicals management can be identified and addressed globally, regionally, and nationally. It has proved to be an extremely important international framework for promoting and advancing chemical safety objectives. While SAICM is important to all countries and other stakeholders, it is of special value to developing countries and countries with economies in transition. This is because many toxic chemical sources in these countries are not comprehensively addressed by any of the existing chemicals and wastes conventions and many of them find it difficult to properly address these sources on their own. And this problem is becoming even more important because of the rapid increase in chemicals production and use. These threats to human health and the environment will not end in 2020.

The 2006 decision that established SAICM expires in 2020. This poses an urgent question: what comes next? The 5th International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM5) will be held in 2020 and no preparatory meetings to consider SAICM's future are currently planned. The only way to avoid this gap would be for ICCM4 to initiate an intersessional process to begin considering the future of SAICM and/or other mechanisms for post-2020 intergovernmental, multi-stakeholder cooperation on chemical safety. Such an intersessional process could develop proposals for post-2020 institutional arrangements for ICCM5 to consider and possibly adopt.

One way forward might be for ICCM4 to call for two intersessional planning meetings back to back with UNEA2 (2016) and UNEA3 (2018). These could then feed into the agenda of a 3rd session of OEWG to prepare the agenda for ICCM5. A high-level segment at ICCM5 could then consider proposals, and could adopt and initiate agreed post-2020 institutional arrangements for sound chemicals management.

SAICM has so far devoted itself primarily to enabling activities for the sound management of chemicals. Beyond 2020 the main focus should become the utilization of these new capabilities and frameworks to take actions at national, local, and community levels to minimize and eliminate actual sources of toxic exposure. Adequate financing and raising the political priority given to chemicals management will play key roles in improving how chemicals are produced and used in order to prevent harms to human health and the environment.

We are pleased that ICCM4 is beginning to plan for Beyond 2020, and the International POPs Elimination Network is willing to contribute to its successful deliberations in the possible contact group.

Thank you Mr. President.