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IUF Intervention on Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs)

Sue Longley speaking on behalf of the IUF, the global trade union for workers throughout the food chain, composed of 410 affiliated organizations in 126 countries.

The IUF believes that Highly Hazardous Pesticides are an issue of **great** concern and that this ICCM4 should adopt concrete decisions for work on HHPs, therefore we are one of the organisations submitting CRP4. We do however appreciate the recognition in the proposed strategy document that agricultural workers and pesticide applicators run the highest risk of exposure to HHPs in the course of their daily work and that they often have no PPE or information about the products they are using. This confirms exactly our own findings. Agricultural workers are regularly exposed to pesticides in the course of their work and suffer fatalities and illnesses as a consequence.

Yesterday the opening film mentioned vulnerable groups and the Special Rapporteur also addressed this issue this morning. I would like to highlight the situation of women agricultural workers: women have traditionally been the largest part of the workforce in crops like tea, but they are increasingly coming into the agricultural workforce in crops like cut flowers, horticulture and those used for bio-fuels – all heavy users of pesticides. We know of many cases of women workers being sent back into glasshouses or into sprayed fields well before safe re-entry times. These women need SAICM to act on HHPs.

The workers that the IUF represents don't own the land they work nor the tools they work with – these are the property of their employers. For many plantation and agricultural workers their employers also own the houses they live in, the hospital they attend and the school their kids go to. This makes it difficult for workers to challenge instructions from their employers to apply pesticides in breach of laws or manufacturers' instructions. This is the daily reality in the field no matter what the pesticide industry says. We believe only those who face the risk have the moral authority to assess it.

The IUF is committed to increasing the capacity of trade unions to inform, educate and negotiate on pesticides but we know it will not be enough – we need coordinated action at an international level to phase out within an agreed time frame the use of HHPs with effective monitoring to ensure it's a real, not a paper phase out. This is the best guarantee workers will have that their health and safety will no longer be sacrificed through exposure to pesticides.

We recognize that the ending of the use of HHPs will require complimentary measures - in particular more work by the relevant UN agencies to develop and promote agro-ecology. There will also need to be a just transition for workers in the chemical industry if their livelihoods are affected by these changes.

In conclusion chair, we believe we need a global alliance to work on the phase out of HHPs and we, the trade unions, want to be part of it.

Thank you.