

# Gender and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020

## Joint Position Paper

### *Women and Gender @ SAICM*

During the third meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group for the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (2-4 April 2019 in Montevideo, Uruguay), a very first informal meeting on women and gender at SAICM took place on the 3rd of April. Various stakeholders from governments, NGOs and IGOs met and discussed the necessity of the integration of gender and concrete ideas for the development of a gender-responsible sound management of chemicals and waste. The group created a mailing list to stay in touch and continue discussions. Parts of the group decided to develop this joint position paper for the third meeting of the intersessional process in Bangkok, Thailand, from 1 to 4 October 2019.

## Gender and Chemicals

Gender aspects are relevant to chemicals and waste management in different ways:

- Gender, as a social category, is linked to gender-specific norms of behaviour, roles in society as well as the development of 'feminine' and 'masculine' identities and influences behaviour in dealing with chemicals. For example, men and women are often affected by different chemicals due to the division of labour between the sexes.
- Gender, as a biological category, shows that women's and men's bodies are affected differently by chemicals.
- Gender analysis allows to ask questions that help us understand and unpack root causes of unsustainable behaviour and societies, and to find innovative solutions for a sustainable chemicals policy.

## Gender and SAICM beyond 2020

SAICM's Overarching Policy Strategy underlines the specific importance of women as stakeholders but yet specific and widespread knowledge on differentiated and long-term effects of chemicals on women and men is still lacking, and, even more so, comprehensive gender mainstreaming within the management of chemicals and waste.

A future framework should be in line with the Principles of gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls reflected in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, CEDAW (1979), the Beijing Declaration and Action Platform (1995), the Conclusions of the 60th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW 2016) and UNEP's own gender mainstreaming strategy.

Furthermore, gender considerations have been increasingly incorporated into global multilateral environmental agreements, including BRS, CBD and UNFCCC - SAICM Beyond 2020 shouldn't stay behind that!

In the Annex, actions and papers underlining and exemplifying the need to integrate gender in SAICM Beyond 2020, are listed.

### **Basic premise**

We believe that gender equality is crucial for a healthy planet and healthy people. Gender equality has to be an integral part of SAICM Beyond 2020.

We therefore encourage you all to include gender in your efforts to elaborate the future arrangements of the Strategic Approach and the sound management of chemicals and waste.

## **We suggest to:**

- **Create a Gender Focal Point in the future Secretariat**
- **Develop a Gender Action Plan**
- **Make women and chemical safety an issue of concern**
- Ensure inclusion of the gender dimension in the strategic objectives and targets in SAICM beyond 2020
- Increase availability of gender-disaggregated data
- Strengthen women's participation in SAICM and ensure the full inclusion of women in decision making on chemicals and waste, in governments, IGOs, industry, unions, and NGOs
- Make gender assessment tools available and ensure their application at the national and international level
- Support regional and national focal points with capacity building and tools for including women and gender issues in their work, e.g. via the SAICM Secretariat
- Provide funding as well as information about financing for women and women's networks
- Uphold internationally accepted human rights instruments
- Strengthen access to justice by establishing an environment division under the International Court of Justice
- Outright banning and/or phasing out of chemicals that have specific negative effects on women
- Strict labelling requirements for chemicals and products containing chemicals that have specific gender implications
- Strengthen the chemical cluster in the review of the SDGs, including paying attention to women and chemical safety as well as gender issues
- A special chapter on chemicals and gender in SAICM progress reports and GCOs
- Appointment of a special rapporteur on chemicals and gender and a Global Outlook Report on Gender and Chemicals
- Develop an online platform for exchange on activities and information on gender and chemicals
- Encourage and support women to engage in green and sustainable chemistry science, education and innovation

The paper is being submitted by the following organisations and individuals:

**WelfareTogo, MSP Institute eV, Center for Public Health and Environmental Development (CEPHED), Eco-Social Development Organization (ESDO), International Sustainable Chemistry Collaborative Centre (ISC3), GreenWorks, PAN Africa, GAPROFFA, CEJAD Kenya, Dr Nils Simon, Maro Luisa Schulte.**

## ANNEX

The following actions or papers underline the need to integrate gender in SAICM Beyond 2020:

- UN Environment signed a Memorandum of Understanding with IPEN in December 2017 to work in partnership on gender and chemicals. These efforts focus on raising awareness, promoting women's engagement and leadership in the decision-making processes as well as contributing to activities related to the Strategic Approach emerging policy issues and relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In this context, IPEN will be working on mapping the impact of selected emerging policy issues on women and their relation to relevant SDGs (Interim report on progress in the implementation of the overall orientation and guidance for achieving the 2020 goal of sound management of chemicals: 2019).
  
- Paper at IP2: Gender and the sound management of chemicals and waste (2017), presented by the Secretariat:
 

“The Quick Start Programme (QSP) Impact Evaluation Report (2015) reported that the QSP projects did not explicitly and proactively ensure the participation of women. At the same time, the Impact Evaluation noted that gender is well balanced, although not explicitly reported at the Secretariat, Executive Board, and Focal Point level. The Impact Evaluation gives two concrete suggestions in line with UNDP's Chemicals and Gender publication in order to increase gender-related achievements within QSP projects: a) raising awareness of the linkages between chemical exposures, the effects on human health and the environment, and gender differences in risk, and b) promote a multi-stakeholder approach to ensure the participation of women in policy development and decision-making. The report also highlights that there were civil society organizations (CSO) and agriculture-focused QSP projects that explicitly addressed gender differences in chemical exposure by looking at the differing roles of parents and children in the rural economy in places such as Kenya, Rwanda, and Uganda.”

“Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and SDG 5 provide new and renewed opportunities to incorporate gender into decision-making. In designing the future framework for beyond 2020, all stakeholders have the opportunity to tap into the potential to address gender issues, promote equality and protect vulnerable populations in the context of sound managements of chemicals and waste.”
  
- Gender Policy Brief (2018) by SAICM Secretariat:
 

“SDG 5 and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides new and renewed opportunities to incorporate gender considerations into decision-making. In reflecting on SAICM and in the future for sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020, all stakeholders have the opportunity to tap into the potential to address gender issues, promote equality, and protect vulnerable populations in the context of sound management of chemicals and waste.”
  
- Report of the Special Rapporteur on the implications for human rights of the environmentally sound management and disposal of hazardous substances and wastes (2019):
 

“Greater attention to both the gendered impact of exposure to toxic substances and its disproportional impact on children”:

95. Equality and non-discrimination are fundamental to human rights law. 69 All human beings are equal and by virtue of this and the inherent dignity of each person, all must have equal protection from toxics. States have elevated duties to protect those who are disproportionately affected by toxic exposures under international human rights law.

96. Biological differences between men and women, such as physiological and hormonal differences, create differing susceptibilities to the effects of exposure to toxic chemicals.<sup>70</sup> Women are more likely to store higher levels of environmental pollutants in their tissues than those found in men. During

pregnancy, lactation and menopause, women's bodies undergo changes that may increase their susceptibility to health impacts from toxic exposures. Furthermore, owing to differences in social roles, including occupational and household roles, and prevailing harmful gender stereotypes, women and men are exposed differently to toxic chemicals with respect to, among other things, the substances encountered and the degree of exposure.

97. The age at which one is exposed to toxic substances is a critical factor in whether the exposure may result in adverse health impacts. Childhood exposure to toxics is interrelated with the gender dimension of the issue.

98. The future framework for chemicals and wastes should have a special focus on the gendered impact of exposure and on childhood exposure. It may wish to create specific obligations for States to take expedited action on well-characterized threats to life and health regarding children and different genders, without waiting for the development of national, regional or global mechanisms to phase out such threats, such as lead in paint“

- Independent Evaluation of the Strategic Approach from 2006-2015 Draft Report

“The process of developing such international standards would need to ensure that the voices of vulnerable and marginalised groups were involved in the decision-making and addressed gender equality within the resulting standards.”

„The common standards across countries, called for by SAICM stakeholders, are supported by the sustainable development agenda and the SDGs agreed upon in 2015; the sound management of chemicals is mainstreamed throughout these goals. Reducing inequality within and between countries in regard to chemicals management will require further efforts by SAICM stakeholders to reduce vulnerable and marginalised groups to chemicals exposure at work, in the home and in the environment. Improving nutrition with sustainable agricultural practices requires SAICM stakeholders to increase efforts to work in partnership to find innovative and alternative forms of agriculture that minimize the adverse impacts on health and environment of chemical inputs whilst increasing production. Continued efforts by SAICM stakeholders to reduce gender inequality and the high incidence of adverse health impacts experienced by women and girls from exposure to chemicals will support the ‘common standards’ pathway.“