

October 6th, 2022

IPEN and CIEL statement at OEWG1: Science-Policy Panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution

Thank you Madam/Mister Chair.

I am speaking on behalf of CIEL and the International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN), a network of civil society organizations in over 120 countries. We appreciate all the hard work and dedicated discussions that have led up to this meeting, and we would like to thank the government of Kenya and UNEP for hosting.

We believe that sound, independent science should determine national, regional, and international policies on chemicals and waste, based on the precautionary principle, the industry duty to disclose information, and citizens' right to know.

In order for a global science panel to be effective, we believe that the panel should focus on **chemicals and waste**. This focus will help identify specific policies to prevent harm and double standards, as well as identify and hold producers of toxic chemicals accountable. Broadening the scope to include the more diffuse term "pollution" will inevitably limit the impact of such an effort since the sources, actions and related policies are much more diverse and complex.

The development of the panel must also be done mindful of **political considerations** that may prevent action. Political considerations and related financial interests have been the deciding factor in many instances, despite clear scientific recommendations in the international policy space for chemicals and waste. **Delayed** action following early scientific warnings has been happening for decades, with the key examples of asbestos, Bisphenol A, and highly hazardous pesticides that remain in use, despite early warnings and clear scientific data on their toxic properties.

We would also like to highlight the need to adapt the Rules of Procedure for the development of the panel, as it is possible for subsidiary bodies under UNEA (Rule 63).

The mandate states that the working group should take into account the need to ensure that the panel "has the ability to address potential conflicts of interest" and that the participants represent a broad range of disciplinary expertise. However, simply adopting the UNEA rules of procedure would not achieve this. The application to participate as an observer does not include a declaration of conflict of interest, similar to what is required for example under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control. In this, organizations applying for observer status have to declare conflicts of interest. We believe that a similar adaptation of the rules of procedure would be appropriate for a future science-policy panel in order to preserve the integrity of the process.

It is also vital that independent scientists can engage actively in the process to develop the science policy panel without being limited in their ability to intervene. Also, expertise will have to

come from a range of environment, health and labour organizations. Therefore, we see a need to adapt the rules of procedure to allow for individual interventions rather than joint group statements.

We look forward to further discussing how increased international action on chemicals and waste can be facilitated.

Thank you.