

Intervention on COW (Chemicals)

Speaker: Juliet Duff

Thank you chair,

My name is Juliet Duff, Irish Doctors Environmental Association, speaking on behalf of the Women's Major Group

On Chemicals and SDGs

Hazardous chemicals are a major concern for our health, and our group believes that chemicals should become a goal area in the Sustainable Development Goals, building on the Johannesburg 2002 goal.

On chemicals, regarding pesticides:

At the ICCM-3 last year September, there was a lot of support for the proposed ban on **most hazardous pesticides**, in particular from developing countries. Women are differently affected, for example the increase of breast-cancer worldwide is a great problem and science shows a clear link with pollutants. Women also transmit these harmful chemicals to their child during pregnancy and breastfeeding often contributing to irreversible lifelong diseases and disabilities.

The UNEP Global Outlook on Chemicals estimates that 900.000 people are dying each year from pesticides and harmful chemicals, and causing illness in 2 million more people. Agricultural workers and communities are suffering unnecessary death and disease, yet the alternatives are on the market.

It is high time to agree on the ban on the most hazardous pesticides. There is no reason to wait. We call on the Governing Council to put this as an urgent priority decision on the agenda.

Regarding EDCs and cocktail effects

These last years our understanding of toxicology is expanding. We now have chemicals which are harmful even at very low dose, with such extensive exposure to a broad range of toxins which can interact, and with bioaccumulation. In this regard, we would particularly like to note Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals, or EDCs, as a major concern. Legislation and capacities of chemical agencies and the medical professional cannot yet deal with these EDCs and cocktail effects. The SAICM decision to add EDCs as an emerging issue now needs the Governing Council to give it the necessary priority and urgency. I would also like to reiterate the importance of WHO & UNEP's report on the growing concerns related to potential adverse effects of anthropogenic chemicals on human & wildlife health, launched today.

Regarding Financing of chemicals safety and clean up activities

The UNEP Global Chemicals Outlook notes that

- Health and environmental effects of chemicals are serious and escalating
- Financial costs of chemical exposure are often unrecognized and substantial

These costs need to be recovered from the chemical industry, as it serves as one source of financial support for SAICM implementation worldwide.

The Global Chemicals Outlook notes that in 2010, the sales of the global chemical industry were more than USD \$4 trillion. How big is 4 trillion? One trillion seconds is more than 120,000 years. A very small percentage of this enormous number – say 0.1% - would yield more than USD\$4 billion US dollars for financing the chemicals agenda worldwide.

Thank you

*SAICM: Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management