

UN Environment Management Group Nexus Dialogue

Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste: a lifecycle approach to chemicals and waste management

5 February 2019

International Environment House II, Geneva

(Followed by a workshop on chemicals beyond 2020 organized by UNITAR on 6-7 February 2019)

Background

Since the adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the world has embraced the Sustainable Development Goals as a plan of action for people, planet and prosperity. Closely linked to the wellbeing of humans and ecosystems, the sound management of chemicals and waste is key to achieving all 17 Global Goals and all three pillars of Sustainable Development, providing opportunities to accelerate the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Chemicals and waste management are addressed specifically in SDG target 12.4 (*Achieve the environmentally sound management of chemicals and all wastes throughout their life cycle, in accordance with agreed international frameworks, and significantly reduce their release to air, water and soil in order to minimize their adverse impacts on human health and the environment*), which is set for achievement by 2020. This timing is aligned with the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) 2020 goal, set by the World Summit on Sustainable Development. There is a need for the global community to reflect on the targets for chemicals and waste beyond 2020, and upon the ambition level for the on-going intersessional process considering the SAICM and the sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020.

The beyond 2020 process is an opportunity to ensure strong political ownership by all relevant sectors. The EMG Nexus Dialogue on the Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste aims to contribute to this process by bringing stakeholders together to discuss challenges and opportunities of the beyond 2020 regime on the sustainable management of chemicals and waste from a supply chain and circular economy perspective. By providing a multi-sectoral platform for discussion among high level representatives of the UN System as well as, representatives from countries and stakeholders along the supply chain, the Dialogue can help **identify** how the UN system can increase its contribution to achieve SDG 12, promote circularity and help develop the beyond 2020 framework building on the valuable work by the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC).

Importance of collaboration in a lifecycle approach

Chemicals and waste may affect economic, social and environmental sustainability at various stages of their lifecycles. A lifecycle approach to chemicals and waste management is therefore critical in order to safeguard the health and wellbeing of humans and ecosystems. The Dialogue will examine the importance of circular economy and a supply chain approach in the framework of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The successful implementation of SDG 12 on Responsible Consumption and Production, requires a systemic approach and collaboration among a multitude of actors operating in the supply chain, from production to waste management. The interlinkages of sound management of chemicals and waste with the wellbeing of people all over the world, the Dialogue will outline the significance of achieving SDG Target 12.4 for sustainable development at large.

Taking a life cycle approach, the EMG Nexus Dialogue will highlight the relevance of sound management of chemicals and waste to a broad range of actors, highlighting the necessity of collaboration across sectors and among actors. Showcasing best practices in collaboration and successful collaborative initiatives that could be adapted to other sectors.

This approach is in line with the discussions at the HLPF 2018, where the official document highlighting the components of SDG 12 emphasized the need to pool expertise and assets across UN entities, to strengthen partnerships involving the private sector and multi-stakeholder actors in order to create a more coherent response.¹ Also the recent Progress Report on the 10-Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns emphasized the need for concerted actions by all actors of society – government, business, civil society etc. in support of SDG 12.²

The EMG Nexus dialogue

It is proposed that the dialogue considers the Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste as an example of an interdisciplinary approach to sustainability along the supply chain. Looking closely at the life cycle of chemicals from the production stages till the disposal of waste will help us identify gaps and opportunities to contribute to the achievement of SDG 12 and the beyond 2020 framework. Examples of successful collaboration in different sectors will highlight the importance of engaging various stakeholders and the benefits of broad stakeholder involvement. This dialogue aims to engage stakeholders from the UN System, Member States, Private Sector, NGOs and academia.

¹ https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/19847SDG12_Highlights.updated_format.pdf

² https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/18549Advanced_Unedited_Version_Draft_report_on_10YFP.pdf

Expected Outcomes:

The Dialogue aims at reaching concrete outcomes in terms of new ideas, communicative messages for outreach and best practices in collaboration to engage new stakeholders in the work to promote the sound management of chemicals and waste. The dialogue outcome will contribute directly to the discussions followed at the UNITAR workshop in the next days as well as the beyond 2020 process and the 4th Meeting of the UN Environment Assembly in terms of suggested actions. The Dialogue specifically aims to:

- Create a frank and open space to discuss the challenges and opportunities derived from the Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste among the UN System and beyond.
- Explore ways, which the UN System and other stakeholder can contribute to the achievement of target 12.4 and the development of the post 2020 framework.
- Document lessons learned and best practices resulted from collaboration, which could be duplicated and adapted to other sectors.
- Promote circularity and life cycle approaches in the management of chemicals and waste while engaging all stakeholders along the supply chain.

Suggested structure and timing:

The Dialogue will consist of technical discussions followed by a high-level session at the closing. The high-level segment will bring together key governments including representatives of developing countries, ambassadors, heads of UN agencies, NGO leaders and private sector representatives to set the political scene. The key policy messages presented at the high-level segment will be shared at the workshop organized by UNITAR on February 6 and 7, 2019 for the attention of the member states in their discussions.

Date and Venue

February 5, 2019

International Environment House II, 9 chemin de Balexert, 1219 Châtelaine Geneva, Switzerland

Collaborating partners:

