



UNITED NATIONS

ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP

**EMG**

**Mid-Term Technical Segment of the 27<sup>th</sup> Senior Officials Meeting**

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GoToMeeting

from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Geneva time.

**EMG SOM27/mid-term/04x**

Distribution: EMG members

### Proposal by UNEP

## A new Issue Management Group on Enhancing Synergies between the post-2020 Biodiversity and Chemicals Frameworks

### Objective

To integrate in the work of the United Nations Environment Management Group and its constituent organizations the recognition of the inextricable link between a pollution-free environment and healthy, productive ecosystems and spur system-wide, coordinated action to enhance synergies between the post-2020 biodiversity and chemicals agendas.

### Background

The world is in the midst of a triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution, underpinned by continued patterns of unsustainable consumption and production.<sup>1</sup> Pollution is a recognized driver of biodiversity loss, as captured in the Convention on Biological Diversity Aichi Target #8, which aims to bring pollution to levels that are no longer detrimental to ecosystem function and biodiversity.

Evidence from the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)'s second Global Chemicals Outlook concluded that the global goal to minimize the adverse impacts of chemicals and waste will not be achieved by 2020.<sup>2</sup> Solutions exist, but more ambitious worldwide action by all stakeholders is urgently required. Similarly, the Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, has cautioned that goals for conserving and sustainably using biodiversity and achieving sustainability, cannot be met by current trajectories, and that biodiversity goals for 2030 and

<sup>1</sup> UNEP (2021), Making Peace with Nature: A scientific blueprint to tackle the climate, biodiversity and pollution emergencies, available at <https://www.unep.org/resources/making-peace-nature>

<sup>2</sup> UNEP (2019), Global Chemicals Outlook II - From Legacies to Innovative Solutions: Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Synthesis Report 2019, available at [https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27651/GCOII\\_synth.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y](https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/27651/GCOII_synth.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y)

beyond<sup>3</sup> may only be achieved through transformative changes across economic, social, political and technological factors.<sup>4</sup>

The world is at a pivotal point as the global frameworks for action on biodiversity loss and the sound management of chemicals and waste are being re-assessed and re-framed. With the postponement of the 5<sup>th</sup> International Conference on Chemicals Management (ICCM-5), there is a window of opportunity to strengthen dialogue within the multi-sectoral, multi-stakeholder Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) process.<sup>5</sup> Similarly, the postponement of the UN Biodiversity Conference (COP15) in 2020 has underscored the importance of continued multi-stakeholder engagement in the development of the post-2020 biodiversity framework.

The COVID-19 pandemic has added an additional dimension to the urgency of tackling the pollution crisis and biodiversity loss crisis in an interlinked manner and within the development of their respective post-2020 frameworks. The burden of waste from medical and societal preventative measures has been enormous; waste management systems have been stretched or overwhelmed. Coupled with the existing plastic waste problems, increasing amounts of e-waste, and the growing concerns of antimicrobial resistance in the environment and its effect on human health and on biodiversity, the impacts from the pandemic are far-reaching into every corner of the economy and society, and on the environment.

Recent publications from the Secretariats of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, as well as Minamata Convention on Mercury, also point out the potential to develop joint agendas and linkages among the chemicals and waste and biodiversity agendas<sup>6</sup>, and among chemicals and waste and climate change agendas.<sup>7</sup> As such, there is recognized opportunity that would warrant the attention of the EMG to bring about coherent, system-wide action on this topic.

### **Activities and scope**

It is proposed to establish an EMG Issue Management Group (IMG) to further explore the interlinkages between the post-2020 global biodiversity and chemicals agendas and articulate guidance for the EMG members to tackle the interconnected crises of biodiversity loss and pollution through their mandates, initiatives and programmes in an integrated manner that responds to a system-level approach.

An IMG would be well placed to engage EMG members in inter-agency dialogue, sharing of information and actions, and spur joint efforts and strategies to catalyze the needed transformative actions from a UN systems-wide approach that could capitalize on existing efforts while striving towards more ambitious, collective impact in raising awareness of the power of collective, system-wide solutions. The proposed IMG would thus provide an

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<sup>3</sup> For reference: Convention on Biological Diversity (2020), Zero Draft of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (CBD/WG2020/2/3), available at <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/efb0/1f84/a892b98d2982a829962b6371/wg2020-02-03-en.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> IPBES (2019), Global assessment report on biodiversity and ecosystem services of the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services, available at <https://ipbes.net/global-assessment>

<sup>5</sup> For reference: <http://www.saicm.org/>

<sup>6</sup> Secretariats of the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm Conventions and the Minamata Convention on Mercury (2021), Interlinkages between the chemicals and waste multilateral environmental agreements and biodiversity: Key insights, available at <https://mercuryconvention.org/biodiversity-report/>

<sup>7</sup> Secretariats of the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm Conventions and the Minamata Convention on Mercury (2021), Chemicals, wastes and climate change: Interlinkages and potential for coordinated action, available at <https://mercuryconvention.org/climatechange-report/>

opportunity for coordinated contribution to the development of the post-2020 global biodiversity and chemicals and waste framework.

If the EMG agrees to establish a new IMG on Enhancing Synergies between the post-2020 Biodiversity and Chemicals Frameworks, its exact activities and terms of reference would be discussed with all interested members of the EMG prior to and during its first meeting. It is envisaged that the IMG would operate for an initial period of 18 months with the possibility of extension.

The development of the thematic and programmatic terms of reference for the IMG could be based on existing literature, including the reports cited in the background session, as well as additional thought-starters developed by UNEP or other EMG members to identify options to coordinate and cooperate on areas of common interest at UN-wide level,<sup>8</sup> and identify avenues to raise the political profile of synergistic actions across the two frameworks, including at the level of UN General Assembly or the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), where the role of an IMG could be a game changer.

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<sup>8</sup> In response to a request from the 3<sup>rd</sup> meeting of the Open Ended Working Group of the Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste and SAICM beyond 2020 process UNEP has outlined the interlinkages of chemicals and waste across eight key areas: 1) climate change, 2) biodiversity, 3) consumption and production, 4) health, 5) the world of work, 6) agriculture & food, 7) human rights, and 8) the cross-cutting themes of strengthening the science-policy interface, enhancing national coordination, and promoting stakeholder involvement. Furthermore, UNEP has provided insights on the Zero Draft of the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework from a chemicals and waste/pollution perspective, with the aim of strengthening the understanding of the linkages across the two frameworks, through the development of the report “Strengthening the links between the biodiversity post-2020 framework with chemicals & waste”, available at <https://s3.amazonaws.com/cbdocumentspublic-imagebucket-15w2zyxk3prl8/a426992b24d9968973e92a2878b5ad5f>