

Thank you, Madame Chair, for giving me the floor.

Distinguished delegates, colleagues,

I speak as the United Nations Special Rapporteur on Toxics and Human Rights.

There is a wide gap that exists between the available scientific evidence on the risks and harms posed by chemicals and wastes, and the regulatory responses adopted by States to address such risks and harms.

This gap is not an accident. It is the result of concerted disinformation tactics by certain industry actors. It is the result of tactics of intimidation and harassment against scientists. It is the result of inappropriate claims of confidentiality of information on the risks and harms of hazardous chemicals and wastes.

All this is aggravating the toxification of our planet, with catastrophic impacts on the effective enjoyment of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment worldwide.

To confront the chasm between available science and regulatory responses, the establishment of a robust, and policy relevant, science policy panel is a momentous step forward. Here I present some key points of design, on the basis of human rights principles, that are relevant to safeguarding the integrity and enhancing the effectiveness of the Panel, for your consideration in the preparation of proposals.

Avoiding conflict of interests of participating scientists is crucial. To achieve this, the language in the form for disclosure of conflict of interests still presents opportunities for further tightening.

Secondly, an enabling scientific environment must afford scientists protections from reprisals.

Another key point relates to commercially sensitive information. Could the Panel conduct assessments using information that is not in the public domain? If the Panel were to rely on information that is kept confidential, the Panel would ultimately undermine its credibility.

Fourthly, there is also the need for capacity building and international cooperation, in order to enable participation of scientists from developing countries in the work of the Panel.

My last point: since science coexists with other forms of knowledge, such as Indigenous knowledge systems and the lived experience of communities adversely affected by chemicals, wastes and pollution, a dedicated space for interface between the Panel and other sources of knowledge is indispensable.

To conclude, Madame Chair, an effective science policy panel must be guided by human rights principles, including transparency, equity, and participation. In this regard, explicit reference to the human right to science would much strengthen the outcomes of this third session.

Thank you very much.