



The Need for a Science Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste, and Pollution

Pollution is well known to **adversely impact human health, biodiversity, climate, and ecosystem health.**

It continues to be the **largest environmental risk factor for premature death** on the planet, responsible for 9 million deaths each year, 2 million of which are attributable to chemical exposures alone.¹

It is one of the **top five drivers of biodiversity loss**,² and it compromises the ability of ecosystems to provide clean air, water and food—in both urban and rural areas.

Last but not least, **pollution undermines ecosystem resilience to climate change**, whilst climate change increases the vulnerability of ecosystems to pollution.³

Over one third (35%) of **ischaemic heart disease**, the leading cause of deaths and disability worldwide, and about 42% of **stroke**, the second largest contributor to global mortality, could be prevented by reducing or removing exposure to chemicals such as from ambient air pollution, household air pollution, second-hand smoke and lead.⁴

Yet, for decades, pollution and its harmful effects on people's health, economic growth and the environment have been neglected both by Governments and in the international development agenda.⁵

Pollution is now recognized by UNEP as one of its three strategic pillars alongside climate change and biodiversity.⁶ Despite this, chemicals, waste, and pollution continue to receive far less attention and resources than either climate change or biodiversity, and are not adequately addressed by existing science policy panels.⁷

Clear, agreed and authoritative science is needed to underpin international policy development if we are to tackle pollution and promote sound management of chemicals and waste.

A science-policy panel would ensure (i) application of the best science to policy making and solutions, and (ii) the focused attention of governments and others (private sector, academia, civil society).

Join the GAHP campaign to spread the word and build support. Express your agency or organization's support for a resolution to establish a science policy panel for chemicals, waste and pollution at UNEA-5.2 in February 2022 and relevant preparatory meetings. Better yet—join Costa Rica, Ghana, Mali, Norway, Switzerland, United Kingdom and Uruguayin co-sponsoring the resolution.

To learn more please contact Rachael Kupka at rachael@gahp.net or Felix Wertli at Felix.Wertli@bafu.admin.ch.

¹ World Health Organization (2021). Update: The Public Health Impact of Chemicals: Knowns and Unknowns. Geneva: World Health Organization.

² <https://www.leaderspledgeformature.org/>

³ Noyes, P. D., McElwee, M.K., Miller, H.D., Clark, B.W., Van Tiem, L.A., Walcott, K. C., Erwin, K., Levin, E.D. (2009) The toxicology of climate change: Environmental contaminants in a warming world. *Environment International* 35 (6), 971-986.

⁴ Prüss-Ustün A, Wolf J, Corvalán C, Bos R, Neira M (2016). Preventing disease through healthy environments: A global assessment of the environmental burden of disease. Geneva: World Health Organization.

⁵ Landrigan, Philip J., Richard Fuller, Nereus J.R. Acosta, Olusoji Adeyi, Robert Arnold, Niladri Nil Basu, Abdoulaye Bibi Baldé, et al. 2018. The Lancet Commission on Pollution and Health. *The Lancet* 391, no. 10119: 462-512. [https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736\(17\)32345-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/s0140-6736(17)32345-0).

⁶ UN Environment Program. For people and planet: the United Nations Environment Program strategy for 2022–2025 to tackle climate change, loss of nature and pollution. UNEP: Nairobi, Kenya, 2021.

⁷ Climate change and biodiversity loss are the focus of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES), respectively.