

## **WECF International OPENING STATEMENT**

Thank you, Mr. Co-Chair,

WECF, Women Engage for a Common Future, member of the IPEN network, would like to take the opportunity of thanking the SAICM secretariat for their excellent organisation of these IP 3 Meeting and the government of Thailand for hosting us here in Bangkok.

WECF International is a global network of over 150 participating civil society organisations in 50 countries working to reduce and replace the use of hazardous chemicals in products, production and waste, focusing on protecting vulnerable population, especially women and children from the impact of all hazardous chemicals, especially those substances which disrupt the endocrine system. In frame of the SAICM Quickstart Programme WECF had implemented several projects and demonstrated successful best practices in implementing SAICM. In our role as Co-Coordinator of the Women Major Group we believe that the Sustainable Development Goals will not be achieved without addressing the sound management of chemicals. In our Women 2030 programme we have implemented and promoting the mainstreaming of gender and chemicals.

It is common knowledge that women and men are impacted differently by chemicals and through different routes. Let me give a few examples: Women are the first environment of their children. We know that globally mostly all children are born pre-polluted, from a range of 50 to 200 substances found in their little bodies. A Canadian study showed women working in the plastic industry have a 5 time higher risk of developing breast cancer in their life. In some countries women make up 85 per cent or more of the pesticide applicators on commercial farms and plantation, often working whilst pregnancy and breastfeeding. They are highly exposed to pesticides. This list could be much longer.

Exposure to toxic chemicals damages not just women's physical, mental and reproductive health but also determines their status in their society. Often women suffering from, for example reproductive damages due to chemical exposure are subject to domestic violence, mental abuse and social exclusion.

Women are still underrepresented in decision-making about chemical safety, waste, and environment. This creates an imbalance of power and injustice that must be corrected. Women have also been under-represented or not represented at all in studies concerning chemical exposures and health outcomes. Gender disaggregated data is needed to understand different vulnerabilities based on biology, occupations, and gendered practices. There is also a gap of gender justice financing mechanisms.

There is an urgent need to give women a focused attention in the SAICM implementation mechanism. Therefore Women and Chemicals should be established as an issue of concern. Thus, gender mainstreaming into each step of sound chemicals and waste management decisions at the national and international levels is crucial for achieving effective and inclusive processes.

Gender considerations should be part of project planning, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, which will help avoid inequality between women and men and better address ways to minimize chemical exposures and enhance a vision of a toxic free future for all.

Thank you.