

SAICM-IP4
(Bucharest, Romania, 29 August – 2 September 2022)

Opening Statement by Labour Constituency

Madam Co-Chair,
Distinguished delegates
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the labour constituency representing by International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), I would like to express our sincere thanks for providing this opportunity to deliver a brief statement at this plenary session.

Two million people died due to exposure to hazardous chemicals in 2019 compared to 1.56 million in 2016. Asbestos alone kills more than 100,000 workers every year. Most deaths due to exposure to hazardous chemicals are preventable.

They can be prevented by reducing or removing chemical exposure.

Madam Co-Chair,

Workers are in the frontline of working with toxic substances and their wastes, often without any knowledge about harmful impacts of them, across all industries through supply chains in extraction, processing, production, transportation, logistics, disposal and recycling.

No one should die just to make a living. We believe human rights must be a starting point in securing an effective new agreement.

The 110th International Labour Conference in 2022 adopted the Resolution on the inclusion of a safe and healthy working environment in the ILO's framework of fundamental principles and rights at work. Now, the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187) are fundamental Conventions.

The adoption of the inclusion of a safe & healthy working environment in the ILO's framework of fundamental principles & rights at work is an important step to prevent these unacceptable losses. Occupational health and safety is an integral part of the SDG Goal # 8 and as well as the Goal 12.

We must inevitably tackle the issue of Occupational safety and health to Integrate chemicals management in key industry sectors and product value chains.

We understand that, the good intention of this IP4 is to deliver a single core document with annexes leads towards finally negotiated and finalized at ICCM5 next year.

This agreement needs to be broadened in scope to better reflect the roles of all stakeholders. This includes greater responsibilities and roles for MNEs, Multilateral development, investor responsibility and public and private sector procurement practices.

Madam Co-Chair,

We expect the upcoming new instrument should recognize that reforms to reduce the impact of hazardous industries should be accompanied by a 'just transition' and effective social protection for affected workers.

We stress here that upcoming non-binding new instrument of SAICM must be ambitious and future-proofed and aspirational. And without adequate and accessible resources and strong governance we will achieve nothing but a waste of time and energy.

Our sincere hope is that we end up with a substantive and coherent document that covers all our key concerns which means all the core issues should be there to leave a structure which can be enhanced later.

Finally, we the labour side expect a successful IP4 that created a good partway to deliver a strong new instrument beyond 2023 by the ICCM5 next year on sound management of chemicals and waste towards effectively protect the health, labour and environment through collective efforts and sustainable actions.

Thank you.