Japan’s general comments on Science-Policy Interface

Japan supports UNEA Resolution 4/8 on the sound management of chemicals and waste, including “the urgent need to strengthen the science-policy interface at all levels to support and promote science-based local, national, regional and global action on sound management of chemicals and waste beyond 2020”. We note from GCO-II that the 2020 goal will not be achieved, and business as usual is not an option. We also note that global gaps can be filled by taking various measures, including strengthening the SPI through enhanced collaboration of scientists and decision-makers. Japan strongly believes that decision making related to chemicals and waste should be backed up with the best scientific knowledge and information, and two-way dialogue between policy makers and scientists should be highly encouraged.

There are a number of existing scientific communities both within and outside of MEAs (e.g., POPRC under the Stockholm Convention / International Conference on Mercury as Global Pollutant). It is crucial to consider an approach to best involve and take advantages of existing mechanisms to facilitate two-way dialogue between policy makers and scientists within available resources. Therefore, modality of the SPI should be discussed after all stakeholders have clear and common understanding of existing gaps and challenges related to scientific communities.

Additionally, Japan is of the view that the scientific information necessary for the management of chemicals and waste significantly differs from those for climate change or biodiversity in nature because:

- Information on chemical properties is already available for a wide range of chemical substances (despite the presence of fragmentation of the information systems). However, adverse effects on the human health and the environment significantly vary by chemical substance. Although specific measures are usually designed for certain group of chemical substances (e.g., the Minamata Convention addresses mercury and mercury compounds), no single measure can be a solution for all chemical substances.

- Various risk assessments have already been conducted by relevant MEAs and international organizations as well as at the national, regional and international level, using a variety of database; and

- Private stakeholders possess much information on chemicals.

Therefore, we strongly suggest discussing potential function of the SPI, if this is a home for SAICM, what to address within the SPI before directly going into specific options to be pursued, taking into account existing scientific mechanisms and ways to synthesize them.