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## Institutional Section

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## Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste and the Bonn Declaration: Implications for the ILO and proposed follow-up action

### Purpose of the document

In 2023, the Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste (GFC) was adopted, which includes a high-level call to action in the form of the Bonn Declaration. The GFC and the Bonn Declaration replaced the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, which was endorsed by the Governing Body at its 297th Session (November 2006). At its 349th Session (October–November 2023), the Governing Body adopted the Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health 2024–30 and the plan of action for its implementation, as set out in document [GB.349/INS/8](#). Of note is action area 1 of the plan of action concerning international labour standards and instruments, which includes output 1.5.1 relating to the endorsement of the Bonn Declaration and the development of a road map on the sound management of chemicals and waste in the world of work. The Governing Body is invited to take note of the GFC and the Bonn Declaration, and to endorse the proposed follow-up action (see the draft decision in paragraph 9).

**Relevant strategic objective:** Fundamental principles and rights at work.

**Main relevant outcome:** Output 6.1. Increased capacity of Member States for the realization of a safe and healthy working environment.

**Policy implications:** Enhanced ILO coordination and cooperation on global chemicals management.

**Legal implications:** None.

**Financial implications:** See paragraph 8.

**Follow-up action required:** Implementation of the action areas, and provision of support to constituents, taking into account the guidance provided by the Governing Body.

**Author unit:** Governance and Tripartism Department (GOVERNANCE).

**Related documents:** [GB.349/INS/8](#).

## ► I. Overview of the Global Framework on Chemicals and the Bonn Declaration

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1. The sound management of chemicals and waste is directly linked to the world of work. Workers are among those most exposed to chemicals, with more than 1 million losing their lives every year due to exposure to hazardous chemicals. <sup>1</sup> Institutions of work can play a pivotal role in championing green chemistry innovations, advocating for safer national and workplace policies and fostering a just transition to healthier and more sustainable enterprises.
2. In November 2006, the Governing Body at its 297th Session approved the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), a global policy framework aimed at ensuring the safe production, use and disposal of chemicals to minimize risks to human health and the environment, and endorsed the proposed follow-up action. <sup>2</sup>
3. In September 2023, a new multi-stakeholder global framework was adopted during the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management held in Bonn, Germany. The Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste (GFC) <sup>3</sup> is supported by the Bonn Declaration, a high-level call to action which was also adopted at the same session <sup>4</sup> and which recognizes that chemical pollution hinders the enjoyment of a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and the right to a safe and healthy working environment. The Conference also adopted a resolution endorsing the formation of the Global Alliance on Highly Hazardous Pesticides, <sup>5</sup> in which it invited United Nations (UN) agencies, including the ILO, to become members of this voluntary multi-stakeholder initiative. <sup>6</sup>
4. The GFC is aimed at strengthening collaboration and coordination among stakeholders to address the triple crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution. The objective of the GFC is to prevent or, where prevention is not feasible, minimize harm from chemicals and waste to protect the environment and human health, including that of vulnerable groups and workers. Recognizing that a safe and healthy working environment is a fundamental principle and right at work, the GFC affirms the need to protect all workers from hazardous chemicals and waste along the entire supply chain. It also calls for workplace measures and policies,

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<sup>1</sup> ILO, *Exposure to Hazardous Chemicals at Work and Resulting Health Impacts: A Global Review*, 2021.

<sup>2</sup> GB.297/PV, para. 260.

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Environment Programme, *Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste*, 2023.

<sup>4</sup> International Conference on Chemicals Management, resolution V/1, *Adoption of the Bonn Declaration for a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste and of the Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste* (2023). See also Appendix I for the full text of the Bonn Declaration.

<sup>5</sup> According to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Health Organization (WHO), “Highly [h]azardous [p]esticides means pesticides that are acknowledged to present particularly high levels of acute or chronic hazards to health or [the] environment according to internationally accepted classification systems such as WHO or GHS [Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals] or their listing in relevant binding international agreements or conventions. In addition, pesticides that appear to cause severe or irreversible harm to health or the environment under conditions of use in a country may be considered to be and treated as highly hazardous.” FAO and WHO, *International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management*, 2014. See also FAO and WHO, *International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management: Guidelines on Highly Hazardous Pesticides*, 2016.

<sup>6</sup> International Conference on Chemicals Management, resolution V/11, *Highly hazardous pesticides*, 2023.

including the ratification and implementation of relevant ILO standards, to be integrated into chemicals and waste management efforts.

5. The Bonn Declaration explicitly invites the governing bodies of UN entities, including the ILO, to strengthen their cooperation and coordination to support the GFC, and to integrate its goals into their programmes of work and budgets, as appropriate. The GFC presents a comprehensive plan of action for its implementation, with five strategic objectives to guide efforts, covering legal frameworks, institutional mechanisms and capacities; comprehensive and sufficient knowledge, data and information; issues of concern; safer alternatives and innovative and sustainable solutions; and enhanced implementation and integration into all relevant decision-making processes. The objectives are underpinned by 28 targets to guide countries and stakeholders in jointly addressing the life cycle of chemicals. Progress in the implementation of the GFC will be assessed by the International Conference on Chemicals Management at its meetings held every three years, unless otherwise decided. Target D7 of the GFC calls on stakeholders to implement measures and strive to ensure effective occupational health and safety practices as well as environmental protection measures in all relevant sectors and throughout the supply chain by 2030. Other targets of particular relevance to the world of work are presented in Appendix II.

## ► II. Proposed follow-up action

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6. As a follow-up to the GFC and the Bonn Declaration, the Office will support the implementation of activities of greatest relevance to the ILO, in consultation with constituents at the national, regional and international levels through its diverse portfolio of work on chemicals management. In addition, the Office will actively engage and support its constituents in implementing relevant GFC activities and initiatives, and will continue to advocate for a multisectoral approach to ensure that the views of its constituents are included in GFC implementation efforts.
7. The provision of support for the implementation of the GFC will contribute to achieving the goal of the ILO Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health 2024–30<sup>7</sup> of providing support to ILO constituents in accelerating progress towards the promotion, respect and progressive realization of the fundamental right to a safe and healthy working environment worldwide, which will ultimately contribute to a global decrease in the number of fatalities, injuries and diseases due to occupational exposure to chemical hazards. The proposed follow-up action is structured around the five action areas of the plan of action for the implementation of the ILO Global Strategy in order to ensure coherence and complementarity, as follows:
  - (a) **Promotion of the ratification and implementation of international labour standards.** The Office will continue to support the ratification and implementation of key international labour standards on chemicals, notably the Chemicals Convention, 1990 (No. 170), and the Prevention of Major Industrial Accidents Convention, 1993 (No. 174), as well as the Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 1981 (No. 155) and the Promotional Framework for Occupational Safety and Health Convention, 2006 (No. 187), both considered as fundamental Conventions within the meaning of the ILO Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work (1998), as amended in 2022. The Office will also support constituents in ratifying and implementing sector-specific and risk-specific

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<sup>7</sup> GB.349/INS/8.

standards that address chemical risks, such as the Asbestos Convention, 1986 (No. 162), the Safety and Health in Agriculture Convention, 2001 (No. 184), and the Safety and Health in Mines Convention, 1995 (No. 176). Furthermore, as decided by the Governing Body at its 350th Session (March 2024), the Office will support standard-setting activities on the consolidation of instruments on chemical hazards in 2027 and 2028.<sup>8</sup> The consolidation of ILO instruments on chemical hazards will ensure an up-to-date approach to managing chemical hazards in the working environment in accordance with the GFC and other multilateral frameworks on chemicals. In addition, the Office will develop technical guidelines on chemical hazards in line with the ILO Global Strategy on Occupational Safety and Health 2024–30 and with the decision of the Governing Body at its 331st Session (October–November 2017).<sup>9</sup>

- (b) **Knowledge development and dissemination.** The Office will develop research and enhance the collection, analysis and dissemination of data, trends and best practices to inform evidence-based policy design for a variety of chemical hazards and industry sectors. Focus will be placed on regional and sectoral priorities (e.g. highly hazardous pesticides, asbestos), specific groups of workers, and emerging gaps and challenges. Knowledge will be disseminated through dedicated training modules on chemical hazards and through key stakeholder platforms and initiatives including the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) and the IOMC Toolbox for decision-making in chemicals management.
- (c) **Promotion, awareness-raising and advocacy.** Through targeted campaigns, events, webinars and global advocacy, the Office will increase the visibility of chemical safety and occupational safety and health (OSH) on various political and policy agendas. Advocacy will be expanded to cover a wide range of target audiences through the strategic leveraging of key stakeholder networks, such as the IOMC and its Toolbox initiative, the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) Partnership and the Global Alliance on Highly Hazardous Pesticides.
- (d) **Technical assistance and support.** The Office will provide technical support for incorporating issues related to chemical hazards in the development of national OSH systems, including the drafting and implementation of national OSH profiles, policies and strategies. In collaboration with the International Training Centre of the ILO (Turin Centre), the Office will continue to provide capacity-building through its projects at the regional, subregional and national levels as part of the Safety + Health for All programme and its Vision Zero Fund, and will include chemical hazards as a core topic in the courses offered by the Turin Centre through the Academy on Occupational Safety and Health and the Master in Occupational Safety and Health.
- (e) **Multilateral cooperation.** The Office will ensure close collaboration with the IOMC and will support tripartite constituents in implementing the GFC. It will also continue its collaboration and cooperation with related international processes, including multilateral environmental agreements, inter-agency working groups and collaborative frameworks, such as the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal,<sup>10</sup> the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent

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<sup>8</sup> GB.350/PV, para. 80.

<sup>9</sup> GB.331/PV, para. 723(g).

<sup>10</sup> [Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal](#).

Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade,<sup>11</sup> the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants,<sup>12</sup> the Minamata Convention on Mercury,<sup>13</sup> the Inter-Agency Coordination Group on Chemical and Industrial Accidents,<sup>14</sup> the GHS Partnership,<sup>15</sup> the IOMC Toolbox,<sup>16</sup> the IOMC Mercury Group,<sup>17</sup> the United Nations Environment Programme Global Mercury Partnership<sup>18</sup> and the Global Alliance on Highly Hazardous Pesticides.

8. The Office's work on safe chemicals management has increased significantly since 2006, notably in terms of its collaboration and cooperation with the multilateral platforms and processes identified in paragraph 7(e) above. This work is expected to continue to grow in view of the standard-setting on chemical hazards to be discussed at the 115th Session (2027) and 116th Session (2028) of the International Labour Conference, as well as the forthcoming ILO technical guidelines on chemical hazards, the GFC and new multilateral alliances in this area. While the GFC (2023) replaces the SAICM (2006), the availability of resources for their implementation differs significantly. In 2006, the Quick Start Programme was established following the adoption of the SAICM, providing a financial mechanism that allowed the Office's related activities to be continued and even expanded.<sup>19</sup> The GFC does not, however, provide for UN-specific funding for its implementation and requires the Office to identify sources of funding. The Office will be looking for extra-budgetary funds to implement the proposed actions, namely through the Safety and Health for All programme.

## ► Draft decision

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### 9. The Governing Body:

- (a) **took note of the Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste and the Bonn Declaration;**
- (b) **endorsed the follow-up action proposed in paragraphs 6–8 of document GB.353/INS/5 and requested the Director-General to take into account its guidance when implementing the Programme and Budget for 2026–27 and in future action by the Office.**

<sup>11</sup> Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade.

<sup>12</sup> Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

<sup>13</sup> Further information is available on the Minamata Convention [website](#).

<sup>14</sup> Inter-agency coordination.

<sup>15</sup> The Global Partnership to Implement the GHS.

<sup>16</sup> IOMC Toolbox for decision making in chemicals management.

<sup>17</sup> IOMC Mercury Group.

<sup>18</sup> UNEP Global Mercury Partnership.

<sup>19</sup> GB.297/19/2.

## ► Appendix I

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### Bonn Declaration for a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste

We the ministers, heads of delegation, and stakeholder leaders, having gathered in Bonn, Germany, during the high-level segment of the fifth session of the International Conference on Chemicals Management, on 28 and 29 September 2023, to strengthen action to tackle the crisis of pollution from chemicals and waste, hereby declare the following:

1. Pollution is the world's largest risk factor for disease and premature death, with pollution from chemicals contributing to millions of those deaths, illnesses and disabilities each year.
2. The sound management of chemicals and waste is essential for achieving the goals of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Chemical pollution jeopardizes sustainable development; the market and non-market cost of inaction could be as high as 10 per cent of the global gross domestic product.<sup>1</sup> Chemical pollution hinders the enjoyment of a clean, healthy and sustainable environment and of the right to a safe and healthy working environment. The impacts of chemical pollution disproportionately affect people living in poverty, informal workers, Indigenous Peoples and other groups in vulnerable situations. Chemicals often have impacts on human health, particularly that of women and children. Gender equality can support the sound management of chemicals and waste.
3. The crises of pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss are closely interrelated and need to be addressed in an integrated manner. The sound management of chemicals and waste will contribute significantly to the achievement of the climate objectives of the Paris Agreement and the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and will thereby assure the long-term integrity of vital ecosystem services and their productive capacity.
4. At the same time, chemicals are, and will continue to be, an integral part of our everyday lives. Annual global chemical sales were projected to double between 2017 and 2030.<sup>2</sup> The impacts of chemical pollution are higher in countries with limited chemicals management capacity.
5. The global goal of achieving the sound management of chemicals by 2020 was not met, despite efforts made under several global agreements and guidelines. In 2006, the international community adopted the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (Strategic Approach) to strengthen the coherence and synergies between existing relevant international instruments, bodies and agencies. The Strategic Approach provided an international multisectoral and multi-stakeholder platform for voluntary partnerships and cooperative initiatives.
6. The sound management of chemicals and waste requires urgent action across all sectors of society and the economy. It should promote a just transition worldwide, with no one left behind, in line with the principles as set out in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, taking into account regional and national circumstances and capabilities in

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<sup>1</sup> Global Chemicals Outlook II: From Legacies to Innovative Solutions: Implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (United Nations Environment Programme, 2019), p. 170.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

terms of availability of skills, technology, institutional capacity, and finance, as well as countries' respective sustainable development priorities.

7. We therefore endorse the Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste, which, together with this declaration, reflects our unwavering shared commitment to strengthening action towards the sound management of chemicals and waste, building on the lessons from and cooperative efforts under the Strategic Approach.
8. We will prevent exposure to harmful chemicals, phase out the most harmful ones, where appropriate, and enhance the safe management of such chemicals where they are needed. We will actively promote and support transitions to circular economies, including through the development of safe chemical and non-chemical alternatives and substitutes that protect health and the environment and lead to reduced waste, recycling free from harmful chemicals, and efficient resource utilization.
9. In accordance with United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 4/8 on sound management of chemicals and waste, we will strengthen our coordination and cooperation efforts at all levels to enhance coherence and complementarity in the chemicals and waste sectors, including through integrating and mainstreaming the sound management of chemicals and waste in national development plans, domestic budgets and relevant sectoral policies.
10. We will actively promote research and innovation for the development of safe and sustainable chemicals, materials, products and processes, including solutions coming from Indigenous Peoples and traditional knowledge systems.
11. We are committed to strengthening capacity-building, technology transfer on mutually agreed terms, and financial support, including from domestic sources, regional and international development cooperation and assistance, as well as from the private sector and philanthropy.
12. We are committed to the effective and efficient management of chemicals and waste through accountability, transparency, and access to information on chemicals relating to the health and safety of humans and the environment, and access to justice, as well as inclusive and meaningful participation that enables multisectoral and multi-stakeholder collaboration.
13. We will engage in the international efforts currently under way to establish a science policy panel to contribute further to the sound management of chemicals and waste and to prevent pollution, as well as to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment.
14. We invite United Nations entities and other relevant international organizations, including the International Labour Organization, the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and the World Trade Organization, to strengthen their role in generating reliable chemicals- and waste-related data, and to facilitate relevant action and collaboration based on scientific evidence. We further invite the governing bodies of those organizations, in accordance with their respective mandates, to strengthen their cooperation and coordination to support the Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste, and to integrate its goals into their programmes of work and budgets, as appropriate.
15. We consider the active leadership, commitment and partnership roles of the private sector and industry throughout chemical value and supply chains essential to the success of the Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste. We strongly encourage efforts to significantly strengthen investment by the private sector and industry in

the implementation of robust life-cycle management, due diligence and resource efficiency policies and measures for a just transition, thereby creating business and growth opportunities.

16. We recognize that inclusive and meaningful participation of and progressive action by all relevant stakeholders across all sectors will be essential for achieving the strategic objectives and targets of the Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste and all the Sustainable Development Goals.
17. We note General Assembly resolution 76/300 of 28 July 2022 on the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and its importance for the promotion of human well-being and the full enjoyment of all human rights.
18. We are determined to reach our vision of a planet free of harm from chemicals and waste for a safe, healthy and sustainable future. We therefore commit ourselves, in a spirit of solidarity and partnership, to implementing the Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste to increase global ambition and action, including:
  - (a) Protecting and respecting human rights for the benefit of present and future generations;
  - (b) Developing and adopting the necessary national chemicals and waste frameworks, strategies, legislation and action plans to improve the management and control of pollution from chemicals and waste;
  - (c) Enhancing national action that supports the implementation, and complements the achievement, of other existing relevant chemicals- and waste-related United Nations multilateral agreements, standards and commitments;
  - (d) Enhancing the safe production of food, feed and fibre by preventing or, where prevention is not feasible, minimizing the adverse impacts of pesticides on health and the environment;
  - (e) Protecting human health, particularly the health of women and children, with special attention to early childhood;
  - (f) Promoting decent, safe, healthy and sustainable work throughout value and supply chains;
  - (g) Strengthening sustainable, predictable, adequate and accessible long-term financing from all sources so that no one is left behind;
  - (h) Strengthening the development and provision of safe and sustainable chemicals with reduced adverse impacts for downstream industry users, workers and consumers;
  - (i) Enhancing cooperation to combat the continued illegal traffic of hazardous chemicals and waste.

## ► Appendix II

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### Non-exhaustive list of targets included in the Global Framework on Chemicals – For a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste that are particularly relevant to the world of work

**Target A1:** By 2030, Governments have adopted and are implementing and enforcing legal frameworks, and have established appropriate institutional capacity to prevent or, where prevention is not feasible, minimize adverse effects from chemicals and waste as appropriate for their national circumstances.

**Target A2:** By 2030, intergovernmental stakeholders develop guidelines to support the needs of interested Governments and relevant stakeholders to implement effective chemicals and waste management strategies, building on, among other things, updates of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals toolbox for decision-making in chemicals management.

**Target B4:** By 2035, stakeholders apply appropriate guidelines, best available practices and standardized tools for hazard and risk assessment and chemical and waste management.

**Target B5:** By 2030, educational, training and public awareness programmes on chemical safety, sustainability, safer alternatives and the benefits of reducing chemicals and waste risks have been developed and implemented, taking into consideration a gender-responsive approach.

**Target B6:** By 2030, all Governments have implemented the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) in all relevant sectors as appropriate for their national circumstances.

**Target D7:** By 2030, stakeholders implement measures and strive to ensure effective occupational health and safety practices as well as environmental protection measures in all relevant sectors and throughout the supply chain.

**Target E1:** By 2035, Governments have mainstreamed the sound management of chemicals and waste through implementation in all relevant sectoral plans, budgets and development plans and development assistance policies and programmes.

**Target E2:** By 2030, partnerships and networks among sectors and stakeholders are strengthened to achieve the sound management of chemicals and waste.

**Target E6:** By 2030, stakeholders identify and strengthen, as appropriate, synergies and linkages between chemicals and waste management and other key environmental, health and labour policies, such as those related to climate change solutions, biodiversity conservation, human rights protection, universal health coverage or primary health care.