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Medicus Mundi International

Meeting:

Seventieth World Health Assembly

Agenda Item:

16.2 The role of the health sector in the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management towards the 2020 goal and beyond

Statement:

Thank you, Chair, for giving me the opportunity to address agenda item 16.2 on behalf of Medicus Mundi International. The statement is supported by People's Health Movement and Wemos.

We compliment the WHO and MS for making serious efforts to address harm to human health and the environment by harmful chemicals and the emphasis on intersectoral collaboration.

However, Global citizens are increasingly exposed to harmful chemical substances, even before being born. Reliable scientific evidence about chemicals is ignored and there is a lag between evidence and policy. We are concerned that the burden of proof, regarding human health or environmental threat of a chemical is increasingly placed on governments rather than polluters. Manufacturers should be held accountable.

We specifically welcome the recognition by WHO and UNEP of EDCs as a global threat and their warnings on these unregulated chemicals linked to breast and prostate cancer, genital deformities, obesity, diabetes and infertility. We cannot ignore the evidence on the contribution of EDC to the GBD and the related health and societal costs which have been calculated by several governments and scientific bodies.

We urge countries to prioritize the health of their citizens and the environment and to apply the precautionary principle. Many chemicals are a threat to human health and there is an urgent need to implement measures to limit or ban their use. And we would like to stress that illegal trafficking of waste should be addressed.

Finally there is a need to address the phenomenon where polluting industries and operations involving hazardous chemicals are relocated to the global South by companies located in the global North.

A framework convention to deal with the full range of harmful chemicals to protect human health, the health of our unborn children and the environment, is needed. We urge the WHO to strive for a global binding agreement on harmful chemicals that hold MS accountable.

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