



BERLIN FORUM ON CHEMICALS AND SUSTAINABILITY: AMBITION AND ACTION TOWARDS 2030 | 7 – 8 JULY 2021

CONCEPT NOTE

The Forum

The Berlin Forum will be a **two-day virtual event** designed to give fresh momentum to high-level international dialogue on the urgent challenges and opportunities in relation to the **sound management of chemicals and waste** and their contribution to the **2030 Agenda** and its **Sustainable Development Goals**.

Aimed at complementing the ongoing multi-stakeholder **SAICM** intersessional process, which has unfortunately been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Forum will consist of **two half-day segments**:

- A **Ministerial Dialogue** (afternoon CEST, **Wednesday 7 July**), moderated by **Svenja Schulze**, Federal Minister for the Environment, which will feature contributions by high-level speakers and a facilitated dialogue between invited ministers and leaders of intergovernmental organisations.
- A **Stakeholder Dialogue** (afternoon CEST, **Thursday 8 July**), moderated by **Rolph Payet**, Executive Secretary of the BRS Conventions, which will feature a dynamic mix of interviews with high-level speakers and discussions among panellists representing governments, intergovernmental organisations, private sector, civil society and academic institutions.

The Context

While much progress has been made in improving how we design, make, use, recycle, transport and dispose of chemicals in a way that reduces or prevents harm to humans and the environment, it is still not enough. The fact is **we are not on track to achieve many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. **More urgent and ambitious action is required everywhere, and across all sectors.**

Numerous studies have underlined that hazardous and often long-lived chemicals are everywhere: in our air, water, land and in our own bodies. The **World Health Organization** calculates that **every year, at least 1.6 million people die due to exposure to hazardous chemicals**. The 2019 UNEP **Global Chemicals Outlook II** clearly pointed out that the social, economic and environmental costs are high and increasing. **‘Business as usual’ is no longer an option**. Moreover, the **COVID-19 pandemic** highlights **the importance of many chemicals** both as potentially beneficial health care aids, and those suspected to add to the threats of COVID-19 infections through exposure to environmental pollutants.

Emphasising and bolstering up **the value of science-based action**, we will **need to ‘build forward better’** in a way that accelerates and strengthens action towards sustainable development and advances the attainment of all SDGs. Soundly managing chemicals and waste will be crucial to overcoming pressing challenges such as **climate change**, **biodiversity loss**, and **stark inequalities** that affect human rights and social justice and hinder economic development.

The Objectives and Outcomes

The Forum will offer participants and observers an **opportunity to hear from leading authorities** about the latest:

- **developments in relation to key trends** in chemicals production, trade, use, recycling and impacts at the global and national levels;
- **policy assessments, action plans and commitments** on how faster progress can be made towards the sound management of chemicals and waste;



- thinking about **innovative technologies, management systems, partnerships and other initiatives** to help make our use of chemicals **safer and fairer**; and
- **success stories** and ideas from governments and non-governmental stakeholders that can be **rapidly scaled up** to meet **current and emerging challenges**.

The event will be of **interest to a wide range of stakeholders**, both governmental and non-governmental. It will offer an **ideal opportunity for all stakeholders to review their own experiences and approaches** with regard to the management of chemicals and waste, and **to be inspired** by the ideas and actions of others.

The Participants

- **Ministerial representatives** of over 50 leading countries and leaders of **intergovernmental organisations** in the field of chemicals and waste management have been invited as speakers, as well as high-level representatives from **industry, non-governmental organisations and academia**.
- Interested **members of the public and the media will be invited** to follow the two-day live-streamed ministerial and multi-stakeholder dialogues. This can be done by prior **registration** at the Forum website.

The Programme

The dialogues will explore **participants' experiences and innovative ideas** on how to enhance:

- **management of chemicals and waste in all sectors**, including health, labour and manufacturing, agriculture, energy and information technology;
- **information sharing and management systems**, including improving transparency, dissemination, education, capacity building and circular economy approaches, as well as green and sustainable chemistry options;
- **governance and decision-making**, including through better use of existing institutions and expertise, enhanced science-policy links and 'win-win' approaches advancing social and economic goods through effective coordination and collaboration across sectors and stakeholder groups.

Throughout the two-day event, participants will be encouraged:

- to share their own unique **chemicals and waste challenges** in diverse regions and stages of development;
- to identify **solutions for improving chemical safety** to protect human health and the environment;
- to identify **success stories** on policies and programmes that **scale up and speed up progress** and
- to announce **their own commitments and pledges** in this context.

In this way, the Forum will emphasise a **wide menu of ideas and actions** that can contribute powerfully and urgently **to social, economic and environmental development** and the achievement of the **2030 Agenda**. The attached **Annotated Agenda** provides details on the format of the Forum, on the themes to be explored and on the many distinguished participants. Speakers will include UN Secretary-General **António Guterres**, European Commissioner Executive Vice President **Virginijus Sinkevičius** (tbc), and German Chancellor **Angela Merkel**.

Coverage and Participation

Apart from the video recording of the Forum, a Chair's Summary will be prepared after the event, and **reporting** of the event will be provided by the IISD **Earth Negotiations Bulletin** (tbc).

More **details on participation and registration** can be found at the **dedicated website**.