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Editorial

Welcome to the October issue of the newsletter for 2026 featuring IPEN (International Pollutants Elimination Network) and their invaluable work in shaping and informing global and national policies around eliminating the threat of toxic chemicals to humans and the environment.

Kind regards,

Guest Newsletter Editor: Allan Fong - HOPE researcher NSW

IPEN (International Pollutants Elimination Network) – Striving for a healthy, toxic free future



Introduction

Chemical pollution poses an enormous threat to humanity, yet the global understanding of this issue remains fragmented. Although many nations have pollution control measures in place, there are gaps in our understanding of the scale of the threat and the risks posed by the dispersal and mixing of chemicals in the environment. Environmental chemical pollution has occurred since the industrial revolution but has accelerated significantly in the last 50 years. Here are some other concerning facts about chemical pollution:

- It has been estimated over 350,000 different synthetic chemicals have been produced by humans
- Many are known to be toxic in small doses
- Chemical pollution is largely cumulative
- Synthetic chemicals have been detected in the upper atmosphere, the highest mountains, the deepest oceans and in uninhabited regions
- It has been estimated one in six deaths are due to humans dying prematurely because of contamination of air, water, food, homes and workplaces
- Chemicals have been detected in the food chain, and in the blood and tissues of all populations including the unborn and infants
- Pollution by fertilisers and other agricultural chemicals have resulted in over 700 “dead zones” where local habitats have collapsed
- Chemicals inflict catastrophic losses on wildlife by contaminating water and killing pollinators

[\(Chemical pollution: A growing peril and potential catastrophic risk to humanity - ScienceDirect\)](#)

Global Attempts to Control Chemical Pollution

There have been various attempts to better regulate the global release and flow of toxic chemicals including:

- Vienna Convention for the Protection of the Ozone Layer (1985)
- Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Waste (1989)
- Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (2001)
- Minamata Convention on Mercury (2013)

Yet despite this, it is estimated it will take 100 000 years to fully evaluate all existing synthetic chemicals for human and environmental safety. In addition, it is unclear if international bans are indeed observed in countries where chemical regulation is weak. ([Chemical pollution: A growing peril and potential catastrophic risk to humanity - ScienceDirect](#))

The “Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC)” is a framework seeking to protect both the environment and human health. Recently adopted in 2023, and it lays out a comprehensive plan with five strategic objectives and 28 targets to guide countries and stakeholders in addressing the lifecycle of chemicals from production to disposal. Their first international conference is scheduled to take place in November 2026 in Geneva and is expected to bring together multiple disciplines across governments, businesses, academia and international organisations, and will provide the foundation for a future in which humanity benefits from chemicals in a safe and sustainable way. ([Global Framework on Chemicals | UNEP - UN Environment Programme](#))

Introducing IPEN



IPEN (International Pollutants Elimination Network) is another global initiative dedicated to forging a healthier world where humans and the environment are no longer harmed by the production, use and disposal of toxic chemicals. It was founded in 1998 at the start of discussions at the Stockholm convention to ban the world's most toxic chemicals. Since its inauguration, IPEN and its members have facilitated the adoption of hundreds of national and global policies to protect humanity from toxic chemicals.

([Home - IPEN \(International Pollutants Elimination Network\)](#))

Core Values

These are the core values which underpin IPEN's work:

- The right to a healthy environment: IPEN strives for a toxic free future to maintain the basic human right to live in a clean, healthy, sustainable environment with access to clean water, air and food.
- Ending the triple planetary crisis: climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution are intertwined, and IPEN aims to curb the use of chemicals which pollute environments, threaten biodiversity and are produced from fossil fuels which worsen climate change.
- Women and children's health: ending toxic health threats is essential to women and children as they face different vulnerabilities from harmful chemicals.
- Local leaders, local voices: frontline communities, indigenous people and women face the greatest risks from toxic chemical exposure. IPEN empowers these minority groups, ensuring they have a voice in the global community

How does IPEN operate?

IPEN leaders are elected to promote IPEN's global agenda. They are experts and community advocates for environmental justice and are mainly from low and middle-income nations in Africa, Asia and South America. IPEN members (or participating organisations) are small groups, generally from low and middle-income nations who compile local data and research to bring unique information and perspectives to international policy discussions. Stronger global policies then form the template for national regulations, particularly in countries with little government experience in managing hazardous chemicals. The 700+ IPEN member organisations have since contributed to global and national policies protecting large populations of people from toxic chemical exposure.



Some of IPEN's work:

1. POPs



POPs (persistent organic pollutants) are long-lived chemicals which remain in the environment and accumulate in living organisms. They are considered a global threat and include:

- Many pesticides (e.g. DDT)
- PFAS (forever chemicals)
- Industrial chemicals (e.g. polychlorinated biphenyls or PCBs)
- Dioxins

Exposure to POPs, even at low levels have been linked to cancer, neurological disorders, learning disabilities, immune suppression and infertility. ([Ending Exposures to Highly Toxic Chemicals \(POPs\) - IPEN \(International Pollutants Elimination Network\)](#))

IPEN contributes the latest scientific research to the Stockholm Convention's POPRC (Persistent Organic Pollutants Review Committee). The POPRC reviews all submissions before updating the list of POPs which should be globally banned. IPEN also brings vital research and

policy advocacy in other global negotiations to shape more health-protective global policies, which in turn serve as templates for national policy deliberations in individual countries.

2. The Toxic Plastic Crisis

IPEN is calling for an international plastics treaty, citing that throughout their lifecycle plastics contribute to climate change and release hazardous chemicals into the environment. With decades of science, policy analyses and local expertise from around the globe, IPEN will be a vital contributor to discussions for a meaningful plastics treaty.

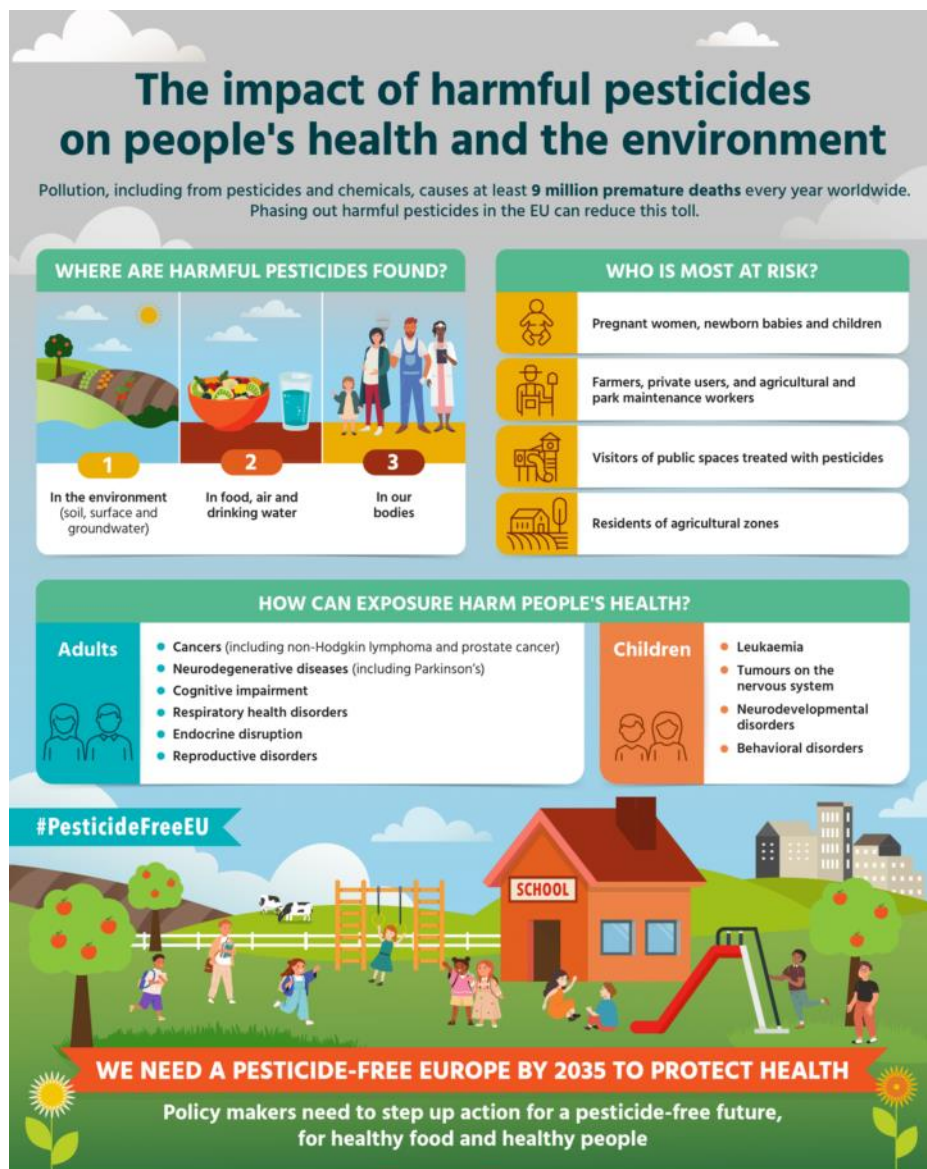
Plastics were first widely used about 75 years ago, yet in this short time they have caused a global toxic pollution crisis. From extracting oil and gas, making petrochemicals and producing plastic, toxic chemicals are released which harm human health. Disposing of plastic waste releases more harmful substances and even recycling plastic results in the formation of new harmful chemicals. While many nations have regarded the downstream issue of ocean litter as the primary concern of plastics, IPEN is shifting the focus further upstream to highlight issues around overproduction and overuse, and the cascading effects on the health of humans and the environment throughout the lifecycle of plastics.



3. Pesticides

Herbicides (chemicals which kill plants) and insecticides (chemicals which kill insects) are the main pesticides in use today. Under the Stockholm Convention, several toxic pesticides were named for global elimination. Highly hazardous pesticides (or HHPs) are those which cause serious harm to humans including cancers, nervous system disorders, reproductive issues and endocrine disruption. IPEN have been working steadily over the years to phase out the use of HHPs, culminating in a decision by the Global Framework on

Chemicals (GFC) to phase out HHPs by 2035. IPEN is also working to expose countries which although have banned harmful pesticides, continue to export them to low- and middle-income countries. By developing stronger policies through the Stockholm Convention, the Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC), IPEN continues to foster dozens of national regulations to phase out harmful pesticides.



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HEAL EU transparency register number: 00723343929-96

Find out more about pesticides and their impact on human health and the environment by visiting HEAL's website (Health and Environment Alliance) ([Infographic: The impact of harmful pesticides on people's health and the environment | Health and Environment Alliance](#))