Chair's Summary of the 4th Berlin Forum on Chemicals and Sustainability

Finance for a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste

The central question of this year's Berlin Forum was how to unlock the investments needed to end pollution. A second focus was the facilitating role of the Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC). The 4th Berlin Forum, held online on 7 October 2026, was again kindly co-hosted by the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) and its participating organizations, with additional support from the GFC Secretariat. The Forum was divided into two sessions: one addressed public sector finance and policies, in particular extended producer responsibility (EPR) systems, the other the interests and needs of investors. Discussants shared their experiences and the challenges they face, and considered how international policy and action can help facilitate transformation.

Public sector finance and policies, with a focus on **Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR)**

Panellists from governments of developing economies, the IOMC, and civil society emphasized the need to use limited public finance strategically and catalytically to mobilize greater investments from industry and the private sector. Regulation and building capacity to implement and enforce it remains a priority, while incentives for sustainable investment and disincentives for polluting behaviour can further support the transition to a circular economy. EPR systems can play an important role in achieving the sound management of chemicals and waste: by drawing on industry and private-sector resources, EPR can secure sustainable financing for waste management and resource recovery and help create secondary markets. However, circumstances differ from country to country. In developing economies, the informal sector often plays a critical and substantial role and must be included in any transition efforts, as must the building of infrastructure and technical capacity. A moderate global fee on chemicals to help close the financing gap was also proposed by one discussant.

Unlocking Private Investment

Speakers from finance institutions, industry, reinsurance, and IOMC highlighted that clear and predictable regulatory frameworks are key to unlocking private investment, while legally binding environmental obligations can provide important investment signals. Additional data on circular and pollution-free investments and their anticipated returns and impact is required, as investment risks are not yet fully understood or integrated into investment policies. Internationally, requirements for products and for data reporting differ considerably. Greater harmonization and increased information disclosure would facilitate the transformation of the investment sector. Participants also noted the growing number of litigation cases and costly settlements due to legacy impacts of harmful chemicals, as well as the need to raise awareness of the impact of chemicals and waste within the sector. What is still missing is an indicator that makes it possible to consider toxicity impact in investment decision making. A pollution equivalent indicator would enable investors and insurers to make informed decisions, much as CO_2e has made it possible to calculate and consider climate impact in investment decision-making.

Conclusions and Outlook to the First International Conference

The 4th Berlin Forum generated a number of ideas for further action at the international level, while keeping in mind the budget constraints that many stakeholders face. The International Conference on the GFC, the first of its kind, to be held from 16 to 20 November 2026 in Geneva, offers opportunities to mainstream the sound management of chemicals and waste in the investment sector. IC1 provides an opportunity to strengthen cooperation and translate financing approaches into concrete projects, investment opportunities, and partnerships for implementation. It is the place to present the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of chemicals (GHS) and the many tools and concepts being developed under IOMC leadership to further facilitate GFC implementation and close the financing gap.