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[Statement](#) and [report](#) to the UN General Assembly by UN Special Rapporteur on Toxics (UNSR Toxics), Baskut Tuncak

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On 25 October, the UN Special Rapporteur on Toxics (UNSR Toxics), Baskut Tuncak, delivered a [statement](#) and [report](#) to the UN General Assembly. The report briefly summarizes and builds on UNSR Toxics' previous useful reports for the UN Human Rights Council on [workers' rights](#), [good practice guidelines](#), [pesticides and right to food](#), [rights of the child and childhood exposure](#), and [right to information](#). This note briefly describes the content of the report and some excerpts are provided below.

### *The introduction makes some key points:*

Pollution is estimated to be the largest source of premature death in the developing world – approximately three times more than HIV-AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined. Air pollution kills 8 million people annually, amounting to 1 in 9 deaths, with 4.2 million deaths from ambient outdoor air and 3.8 million from exposure to smoke from dirty cook-stoves and fuel. Over two million workers die every year from occupational diseases, nearly one million from toxic exposures alone. The transfer of polluting industries, manufacturing activities and supply chains from wealthier countries to those with lower levels of protection contribute greatly to these adverse impacts on life and health.

A series of case study examples illustrate current toxics issues. These include air pollution (South Korea), contaminated land (Kosovo), water pollution (Vietnam), agricultural production (Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone), extractive industries (Brazil, Peru), chemical industries (China, India), manufacturing and consumer products (South Korea), nuclear radiation (Marshall Islands, Kazakhstan, Japan), and waste (Cote d'Ivoire, Denmark, UK, Sierra Leone).

There is also a section of the report that links the [sustainable development goals](#) to human rights. This includes the [Beyond 2020 process in SAICM](#) and [business and human rights initiatives](#).

## ***Beyond 2020***

This section proposes some elements for the new Beyond 2020 chemical framework and suggests two legally binding instruments on business responsibility and workers' rights. The report mentions a previous call made by UNSR Right to Food and UNSR Toxics for a treaty to regulate hazardous pesticides throughout their lifecycle.

Proposed elements for the new chemical framework include:

Require governments to have effective national systems for chemicals and wastes management that protect against toxic exposures. Use universal periodic review or some other rigorous mechanism to evaluate progress. Update the definition of a substance of global concern to include its presence in global supply and value chains. Develop a mechanism to phase-out chemicals of global concern. Special focus on the gendered impact of exposure and on childhood exposure.

The report recommends developing two legally binding instruments on businesses at the national, regional and global levels:

Business and human rights; compelling businesses to include toxic chemicals and pollution risks and prevent their impacts on human rights. Including principles to protect workers as described in the report on [workers' rights](#).

### ***Business and human rights initiatives***

Notes that in July 2018, an Intergovernmental Working Group established by the Human Rights Council produced a zero-draft of a new treaty to “*regulate, in international human rights law, the activities of transnational corporations and other businesses.*” The recommendation is that, “*States should compel all businesses in their territory or jurisdiction to actively monitor, identify and prevent human rights violations... States should ensure that human rights due diligence includes toxic chemical and pollution risks.*”

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### ***Excerpts***

“Not only are children exposed during sensitive periods to a multitude of substances with known and unknown toxicity from a plethora of sources, but they are also exposed at higher levels than adults.”

“Experiments have demonstrated that exposures to combinations of substances at levels not predicted to have adverse effects can result in adverse effects. This has cast doubt on the conventional paradigm that seeks thresholds for no observed adverse effects as the basis for defining safety.”

“Exposure to hazardous substances is fundamentally about the right to life, non-discrimination and the right to bodily integrity, and dependent on the realization of everyone’s right to information, meaningful participation, freedoms of association and assembly, and the right to an effective remedy, among others.”