



**Oral STATEMENT**  
**39th session of the Human Right Council**

**Item3**  
**Clustered ID with the Special Rapporteur on the**  
**implications for human rights of the environmentally**  
**sound management and disposal of hazardous**  
**substances and wastes**

Thank you M. Vice President!

MMM welcomes the excellent report of the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and hazardous substances and wastes, and its focus on the situation of workers implicated and affected by occupational exposure to toxic and hazardous substances worldwide - an important and wide-ranging issue.

As rightly articulated in the report, women are among the most at risk, first because they are more likely to store higher levels of environmental pollutants in their body than men, especially during pregnancy, lactation and menopause. Women also often accumulate risks factors, including poverty, migration, informal work and a strong presence in high-risks sectors like manufacturing and agriculture.

Of special concern is indeed the case of women of childbearing age. Exposure to toxic substances at work before and during the earliest stages of pregnancy, can seriously impact not only the mother's health, but also her child's physical and mental development - with potentially lifelong negatives consequences or even death of the child.

In the face of the magnitude, the complexity and the cross-sectorial nature of the problem, as well as the multitude of stakeholders and their conflicting self-interests, regulation alone, while absolutely necessary, is not enough.

MMM calls upon States to focus on prevention with information, education and awareness rising, combined with Human Rights-based proactive policy.

An example of such policy is to integrate in occupational medicine individual risk assessments by toxicologists<sup>1</sup>, especially targeting women of reproductive age working in the most at risk sectors and in the lower wage segment.

We therefore respectfully suggest that the Special Rapporteur collects and share such best practices to address this major and growing global issue.

Thank you!

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<sup>1</sup> See for example: <http://www.em-consulte.com/en/article/114291>