Concept Note and Thought-Starter for the High-Level Dialogue
Together for a Better Future by Design

18 November – 19 November 2026

Context and objectives

Chemicals are fundamental to modern economies, contributing approximately US$5.7 trillion to global GDP and underpinning more than 95 per cent of manufactured goods. With global chemical production projected to double by 2030 from 2017 levels, the case for preventing harm and embedding sustainability across chemical value chains is urgent. The first International Conference of the Global Framework on Chemicals (GFC IC1) provides a platform for stakeholders to work towards a common vision of a planet free of harm from chemicals and waste.

The High-Level Dialogue marks a global opportunity to identify where political leadership, policy action, collaboration and investment can accelerate implementation of the Framework. It will bring together ministers, senior leaders from businesses, financial institutions, international organizations, and other stakeholders. The Dialogue will take place over two half days on Wednesday 18 November (pm) and Thursday 19 November (am) 2026. To achieve the targets of the Framework, leaders need to act. The High-Level Dialogue provides the opportunity for sharing ambition and mobilizing action and partnership.

The objectives of the High-Level Dialogue are to:

- Strengthen political, corporate and civil society leadership and shared ownership of the Framework;
- Identify priority actions that can accelerate progress towards the Framework's Strategic Objectives and targets;
- Promote collaboration across governments, industry, finance and civil society to address shared implementation challenges;
- Identify priorities for enabling policies, partnerships and investment approaches capable of scaling practical solutions; and
- Build alignment on where collective efforts should be concentrated over the next 3 years.

The expected outcome of the Dialogue will be a shared understanding of the urgency, opportunities and shared responsibility for advancing implementation of the Framework. A concise summary document will be produced and presented to the International Conference plenary on Friday 20 November, 2026.

Themed Conversations in plenary (open session)

Wednesday 18 November 2026 | 15:00 – 18:00
Plenary Room A, The International Conference Center (CICG), Rue de Varembé 17, 1202 Geneva
Format: Open session in plenary

- Conversation 1: Transparency without overload
- Conversation 2: Green and Sustainable Chemistry – solution or pipedream?
- Conversation 3: De-risking the Future: investing beyond hazardous chemicals

Context for the themed conversations may be viewed in Annex I.

- Each conversation will conclude with messages which feed into the High-Level Dialogue outcome document.

- Each conversation will last for a duration of 35 minutes. Within each conversation, there will be a 20-minute interactive panel discussion with selected high-level representatives on stage. Following these discussions, there will be approximately 15 minutes for interventions from high-level representatives from the floor.

- High-level representatives may use this opportunity to ask questions, share relevant experiences or offer comments related to the discussion. To prepare for the conversations, High-Level delegates may consider their country's or organization's priorities or experiences that align with the themes. Interventions should be concise and limited to approximately two minutes or less.

- High-level representatives may have an advisor or additional persons seated with them for the themed conversations.

- Any Conference participant may observe the conservations which will occur in a plenary setting.

High-Level Dinner (By invitation only)

Wednesday 18 November 2026 | 18:30 – 21:00
Location: École Hôtelière de Genève, Avenue de la Paix 12, 1202 Geneva
Format: By invitation only

A High-Level Dinner will be held to facilitate networking and further discussions. Invitation cards will be distributed separately to invited participants, together with the relevant logistical information.

Leadership Roundtables (Closed session)

Thursday 19 November 2026 | 09:30 – 13:00
InterContinental, Chemin du Petit-Saconnex 7, 1209 Geneva
Format: Closed roundtable session for registered high-level participants, with only one delegate per country/organization.

During the closed session, high-level representatives will have an opportunity to highlight their priority areas under the Global Framework on Chemicals – their national or organizational experiences, and perspectives. Each representative is expected to provide their views on strategic priority actions. A series of questions will be tabled to determine the roles, dependencies and opportunities for different stakeholders to mobilize and scale up the resources required to deliver the Framework's objectives and targets. Participants are encouraged to respond on strategy, opportunities, collaboration and enabling conditions and indicate where leadership can make the greatest difference towards implementation over the next three years.

The roundtables will each discuss the same questions and will be organized so that each table has a mix of different stakeholders. Each table's outcomes will inform an outcome document that will be reported to the Conference plenary.

The closed roundtable session will be in English only. Delegates requiring interpretation will be required to indicate and register their interpreters who may perform whisper interpretation.

Context for the discussions

A preliminary review of progress towards the strategic objectives and targets of the Framework (document UNEP/GFC/IC.1/3) identifies three overarching areas for accelerated action to address key barriers to progress:

- Strengthening legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms;
- Increasing transparency and advancing safer alternatives; and
- Mobilizing finance and scaling up investment.

High-level representatives are invited to consider these areas in preparation for the discussions, and more information is available in Annex II).

Guiding Questions

Opportunities and priorities

1. What are the most significant environmental, social and economic opportunities presented by the transition to a planet free of harm from chemicals and waste?
2. Which strategic priorities, investments, and partnerships are critical for achieving the Framework's objectives and targets, and how are they currently being implemented?

Challenges

3. What are the challenges and barriers that limit you in seizing these opportunities? What hinders wide uptake of action? How can this be overcome?
4. What challenges are limiting greater transparency, information sharing and the adoption of safer and more sustainable chemicals and products across value chains?

Enablers and incentives

5. Building on the challenges previously identified, which policy measures could accelerate implementation and create an enabling environment for action?
6. What financing mechanisms, economic incentives or investment models could mobilize resources and strengthen the business case for transition?

Committing to action

7. After discussions, which two priorities should be a major focus of action by the next International Conference?

Statements

To promote interactive dialogue during the sessions, there will be ***no*** statements or formal speeches during the conversations, roundtable discussions, and/or plenary sessions of the high-level dialogue. Formal written statements, however, are invited for posting on the International Conference website. Kindly refer to the website for further details.

Annex I: High-Level Dialogue Themed Conversations

Conversation 1: Transparency without overload
What will this conversation include? This conversation explores the product information and data needed to track progress credibly and determining what product and chemicals information flows across value chains are needed without overwhelming key stakeholders.

Why is this important? Effective implementation depends on access to reliable information that supports better decision-making. Governments, businesses, investors and consumers increasingly require credible information on chemicals across value chains, yet reporting systems often remain fragmented, resource-intensive and difficult to compare. As expectations for transparency continue to grow, there is an opportunity to improve accountability, strengthen risk management and build public trust while ensuring that sharing information remains practical, proportionate and interoperable.

Conversation 2: Green and Sustainable Chemistry – solution or pipedream?
What will this conversation include? This dialogue explores how green and sustainable chemistry can accelerate safer alternatives, product redesign and pollution prevention, while strengthening innovation, competitiveness, and resilient value chains, and what is needed to scale these approaches.

Why is this important? Green and sustainable chemistry can accelerate the development of safer alternatives, product redesign and pollution prevention, while supporting innovation, competitiveness and more resilient value chains. However, moving from promising approaches to implementation at scale requires enabling policy environments, investment, market demand, credible ways to measure progress, and stronger collaboration across value chains.

Conversation 3: De-risking the Future: investing beyond hazardous chemicals
What will this conversation include? With global chemical production projected to double by 2030, preventing harm by design is becoming increasingly important. This dialogue explores how green and sustainable chemistry can accelerate safer alternatives, product redesign and pollution prevention, while strengthening innovation, competitiveness, and resilient value chains, and what is needed to scale these approaches.

Why is this important? Solutions already exist, but investment has not yet reached the scale required to transform markets. Chemicals exposure and pollution can generate material financial, risks, yet chemicals management remains comparatively underrepresented in sustainable

finance. Mobilising greater investment in safer chemicals (away from hazardous chemicals), pollution prevention and sustainable value chains will require clearer policy signals, stronger metrics and data, investment-ready opportunities, and financing approaches that can reduce risk.

Annex II: Priorities for accelerated action

Working document UNEP/GFC/IC.1/3 Tracking progress: indicative overview of progress under the Global Framework on Chemicals – for a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste highlights three main areas for accelerated action, namely legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms, transparency and safer alternatives and finance and investment.

Roundtable participants may consider these priorities from their respective perspectives the following:

- **Government**: exploring the opportunities to strengthen institutional capacity including for domestic financing; exploring effective policies to promote upstream, preventative solutions; integrating chemicals and waste management into national planning, budgeting and investment priorities; exploring the opportunities to create or strengthen the enabling environment for private finance.

- **Business**: exploring how to support investment decisions in developing safer alternatives including the use of green and sustainable chemistry and better product design; how to improve business to business information flow and identify which data is needed by whom and mobilize resources along the value chain; exploring the market benefits, and job creation opportunities, deriving from investing in innovative approaches.

- **Financial institutions**: exploring how to leverage innovative financing and encourage banks, insurers and investors to systematically integrate chemical related impacts, risks and opportunities into lending, underwriting and investment decisions; which key data are needed by financial institutions and which key indicators are relevant to incorporate into financial investments.

- **Civil society**: exploring how civil society and the public can support the safe and sustainable management of chemicals operation in their daily decisions; how can foundations, philanthropic networks and others support investment in chemicals and waste management as part of advancing broader sustainable development goals; what role there is for community-based financing models or other innovative approaches.

Further details on the three areas, for additional context, may be found below:

Legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms

Gaps remain where policy, innovation, and investment can have the greatest impact. It helps governments, industry, brands, and investors better understand how safer and more sustainable approaches can reduce harmful exposure risks while opening new opportunities for innovation, resilience, and growth. Important steps are required to create enabling conditions, including robust, harmonized data systems, agreed indicators to track progress consistently, greater transparency to build trust and accountability, coordinated action across sectors and value chains and laws, regulations and incentives that support safer innovation and investment.

Potential actions include:

Area	Potential actions
Legal frameworks and institutional mechanisms	- Focus on consolidating regulation, policies and frameworks - Strengthen regulatory controls, compliance and enforcement. - Draw on evidence and experience from other jurisdictions. - Establish extended producer responsibility schemes. - Use economic instruments with revenues for pollution and waste management.

Source: Adapted from working document UNEP/GFC/IC.1/3 Tracking progress: indicative overview of progress under the Global Framework on Chemicals – for a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste.

Transparency and safer alternatives

Across high-impact sectors, stakeholders are increasingly recognizing that the next frontier is designing chemicals, materials and products where safety and sustainability are built from the beginning. Innovation, circular approaches and safer alternatives can help product manufacturers and brands reduce harmful exposures and impacts while strengthening innovation, competitiveness, and economic resilience across value chains. To accelerate progress, a fundamental shift is required: from managing pollution to preventing harm by design, from linear production models to circular and sustainable systems and from fragmented efforts to coordinated action across the life cycle of chemicals in sectors and value chains. Stakeholders can focus on progress made, key actions which acceleration action where acceleration is most needed and how this is occurring, including what resources, partnerships, capacity-building efforts, policy changes, or financing mechanisms are needed to move implementation of the framework forward.

Potential actions include:

Transparency and safer alternatives	- Promote chemical footprinting and digital tracking systems across value chains. - Improve access to chemical-composition information. - Promote and invest in activities that foster innovation, promote safer alternatives and advance sustainable chemicals and waste-management strategies in key sectors. - Strengthening existing international, regional and national initiatives on green and sustainable chemistry with a focus on implementation.

Source: Adapted from working document UNEP/GFC/IC.1/3 Tracking progress: indicative overview of progress under the Global Framework on Chemicals – for a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste.

Finance and investment

Solutions already exist to make chemicals, materials, and products safer, more sustainable and more circular, but they are not yet scaling at the pace required. A major challenge is that financial flows remain insufficiently aligned with safety, sustainability and circularity objectives, slowing the transition toward systems that reduce harm while creating long-term economic value. While the economic case for accelerating this transition is becoming increasingly clear, the challenge is that health costs are borne by society and government, while business benefits and costs are often isolated from this. Redirecting investment is not only about reducing risk but also about unlocking new market and economic opportunities across sectors and value chains. This Dialogue can bring together the key actors to strengthen the enabling conditions needed to scale solutions, unlock investment opportunities and turn commitments into measurable action toward a planet free of harm from chemicals and waste.

Potential actions include:

Finance and investment	- Provide clear policy signals and reduce investor uncertainty. - De-risk investments to attract private capital. - Improve chemicals-related data and metrics required for financing or investment decision - Expand public–private partnerships for pollution prevention. - Provide incentives for innovation, including green and sustainable chemistry. - Integrate chemicals and waste into climate, biodiversity and circular-economy finance agendas. - Use public budgets, and policy signals to mobilize and scale private investment

Source: Adapted from working document UNEP/GFC/IC.1/3 Tracking progress: indicative overview of progress under the Global Framework on Chemicals – for a Planet Free of Harm from Chemicals and Waste.