



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

### Fifty-fourth session

11 September–13 October 2023

Agenda item 3

**Promotion and protection of all human rights, civil,  
political, economic, social and cultural rights,  
including the right to development**

### **Written statement\* submitted by Integrated Youth Empowerment - Common Initiative Group (I.Y.E. – C.I.G.), a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 August 2023]

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\* Issued as received, in the language of submission only.



## **Interactive Dialogue with Implications for Human Rights of the Environmentally Sound Management and Disposal of Hazardous Substances and Wastes in India**

The Human Rights Committee has emphasized that environmental degradation and pollution represent a threat to human rights including the right to life. Exposure to hazardous substances threatens a wide range of other rights including the rights to bodily integrity, health and a healthy environment. Many countries are in effort to control hazardous substances and wastes but country like India where about 4.43 million tons of hazardous wastes are generated annually and it is having devastating effect on Indian people. Hazardous wastes are the worst type of waste products as they are extremely harmful for the environment and cause significant health hazards. Unfortunately, Indian government has paid barely any attention in treating hazardous wastes properly, resulting in environmental degradation for years. A recent joint study by The Associated Chambers of Commerce of India (ASSOCHAM) and PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) shows that hazardous wastes in India are mounting at a rate of 3 to 7 per cent per year, a sharp and concerning surge. This has serious environmental impacts like water pollution, methane emissions, and soil degradation. Hazardous waste is more dangerous for its direct effect on health and environment. The combustible gas methane is a common byproduct of accumulation of hazardous waste, resulting in health diseases such as lung infection, heart diseases, radiation which can cause cancer. India, which has close to 8,050 towns and cities, has never officially estimated the domestic hazardous waste it generates. Waste generation has grown rapidly in the past decade and reached 4.43 million tons each year in India. Over 80 percent of the waste collected in India is disposed of indiscriminately in dump yards in an unhygienic manner, leading to health and environmental degradation. The waste workers are working without proper safety gear and equipment. The absence of proper infrastructure for scientific disposal and recycling of hazardous waste has resulted in poor handling of such waste in India. Burning of hazardous waste at landfills is still one of the most common and primitive methods of disposing, resulting in immense harm for health and environment. Collection and transportation of hazardous waste is often akin to dry or wet waste, resulting in further problems in segregating and recycling hazardous waste. Absence of incineration infrastructure in India is also a contributing problem, as most waste collectors are habituated to burning waste in uncontrollable temperature. Waste collectors collecting hazardous waste are mostly ill-equipped, untrained and poorly paid. Workers who collect hazardous waste are often exposed to its poisonous chemical nature, resulting in contracting severe diseases. They are seldom supplied with necessary equipment to collect hazardous waste safely. They are also often unaware of the serious impacts of burning hazardous waste due to little or no knowledge of its composition. These toxic substances in India are causing various forms of cancer, reproductive abnormalities, lung diseases, diabetes and learning disabilities, among other adverse health impacts. We urge this council to ask Indian government to take concrete steps for proper disposal of hazardous substances and wastes in dump yards and also provide proper safety gear to sanitary workers.

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