Final report of the Industrial Chemicals Sector Task Team 1

1. Preamble

The parties in the Industrial Chemicals Sector—National Base Chemicals Employers Association (NBCEA), Fertiliser Industry Employers Association (FIEA), National Specialty Chemicals Employers Association (NSCEA), Surface Coatings Employers Association (SCEA), Explosives Industry Employers Association (EIEA), and trade unions CEPPWAWU, GIWUSA, NUMSA, Solidarity, and SACWU—concluded and signed the Industrial Chemicals Sector Substantive Agreement in June/July 2024. This Agreement established a task team on Path to Zero Harm and the Just Transition to the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and a low-carbon economy.

2. Terms of Reference

The task team discussed and agreed upon the terms of reference outlining its purpose, powers, tenure, and composition. Gerhard Cloete was appointed as the convener/facilitator of the task team meetings.

3. Process

The task team has met thrice since its inception. During these meetings, employers reported that, while there is room for improvement, safety standards in the sector are generally aligned with industry norms. There is no imminent crisis requiring urgent intervention. However, Organised Labour's interest in playing an active role is welcomed and viewed positively by the employers.

4. Agreement on Key Principles

Following the exchange of proposals and deliberations, the task team agreed on the following key principles:

4.1 Path to Zero Harm

4.1.1 The parties commit to an Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) program to achieve zero harm, including:

- An investigation into the link between production targets, bonuses, and safety, to understand their potential impact on workplace safety.
- The creation of a culture that enables workers to withdraw from a perceived unsafe work area by following established workplace-specific protocols and procedures.
- Safety protocols will include consultation with line management at the point of occurrence, with further consultations as necessary to establish appropriate risk mitigation measures.

4.1.2 Labour representatives will collaborate with management, safety committees, and safety representatives to identify circumstances and elements that deem a workplace unsafe.

4.1.3 Trade union representatives may stand for election to safety committees, and safety will be a standard item in Labour-Management meetings.

4.1.4 Notwithstanding the inherent risks associated with operations, the parties agree to foster a safety culture, encapsulated by the principle: *If it cannot be safely done, don't do it*. This requires the implementation of robust risk mitigation protocols.

4.1.5 Employers will notify the relevant union's Health and Safety Department of serious workplace injuries and fatalities. Union representatives may participate in investigations, but statutory and business practices, including timelines, compliance, and urgency, will prevail. Investigations must adhere to stipulated timelines, and union unavailability should not delay the process.

4.1.6 Employers provide proper PPE and promote ongoing safety awareness as part of the workplace culture through tools such as toolbox talks, SHE committees, and annual inductions.

4.1.7 Employers conduct regular health and safety inspections, with findings being recorded and actioned accordingly. Annual medicals are performed to ensure workers are fit for duty.

4.2 Just Transition Relating to 4IR and the Low-Carbon Economy

4.2.1 Recognising the realities of the Industrial Chemicals sector, including the stability of chemical manufacturing processes, the task team acknowledges that the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) is expected to bring incremental, not revolutionary, changes to the industry. The low-carbon economy primarily impacts energy efficiency and emission reductions, with limited immediate effects on skills requirements or workforce size.

4.2.2 Employers will engage unions well before contemplating dismissals related to Section 189 of the Labour Relations Act (LRA). These engagements will include scenario planning and assessing potential impacts on the workforce and company sustainability.

4.2.3 Existing platforms for Labour-Management engagement will be used to share information openly on business conditions and any contemplated changes. This will prevent employees from being surprised by potential job redundancies.

4.2.4 The parties will act jointly to lobby against industrial policies or regulations that threaten the sustainability of the sector.

4.2.5 Employers will continue to participate in CHIETA structures to advance workforce skills development, ensuring that new curricula and qualifications remain relevant to the industry's evolving needs.

Signed at the NBCCI Offices on 28 October 2024.

National Base Chemicals Employers Association (NBCEA)

GIWUSA

Fertiliser Industry Employers Association (FIEA)

SACWU

National Specialty Chemicals Employers Association (NSCEA)

CEPPWAWU

Surface Coatings Employers Association (SCEA)

SOLIDARITY

Explosives Industry Employers Association (EIEA)

NUMSA