

2021 session of United Nations High Level Political Forum and Economic and Social Council

“Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”

6-16 July 2021

Input by the President of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal

Instruction

The High Level Political Forum (HLPF) under the auspices of the General Assembly (“SDG Summit”) resulted in the adoption of a Political Declaration that proclaimed a decade for action and delivery for sustainable development and outlined ten crosscutting areas for accelerated action for the achievement of the SDGs. The General Assembly decided that the theme for the 2021 session of the HLPF and the Economic and Social Council will be “Sustainable and resilient recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic that promotes the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development: building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development”.

The HLPF in 2021 will also discuss Sustainable Development Goals 1 on no poverty, 2 on zero hunger, 3 on good health and well-being, 8 on decent work and economic growth, 10 on reduced inequalities, 12 on responsible consumption and production, 13 on climate action, 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions, and 17 on partnerships in depth. The Forum will consider the integrated, indivisible and interlinked nature of the SDGs.

Input from the President of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention could showcase the views and guidance of your intergovernmental bodies on those aspects of the response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the various measures and types of international cooperation that can control the pandemic and its impacts and put the world back on track to achieve the SDGs by 2030, within the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development and highlight the views in line with the six areas below.

Introduction

The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal was adopted on 22 March 1989 by the Conference of Plenipotentiaries in Basel, Switzerland, and entered into force in 1992. As at February 2021, it has 188 Parties and thus its coverage is global. The overarching objective of the Basel Convention is to protect human health and the environment against the adverse effects that may result from the generation and management of hazardous and other wastes. Its scope of application covers a wide range of wastes defined as “hazardous wastes” based on their origin and/or composition and their characteristics or so defined by domestic legislation and notified to the Secretariat, as well as wastes defined as “other wastes” requiring special consideration - household waste and incinerator ash, certain plastic wastes.

The provisions of the Convention center around the following principal aims:

- the reduction of generation of hazardous and other wastes and the promotion of their environmentally sound management, wherever the place of disposal
- the restriction of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and other wastes to a minimum except where it is perceived to be in accordance with the principles of environmentally sound management; and
- a control system applying where transboundary movements are permissible.

The first aim is addressed through a number of general provisions requiring States to observe the fundamental principles of environmentally sound waste management (Article 4). A number of prohibitions are designed to attain the second aim: hazardous wastes and other wastes may not be exported to Antarctica, to a State not party to the Basel Convention, or to a Party having banned their import (Article 4). Parties may, however, enter into bilateral or multilateral agreements or arrangements regarding transboundary movement of hazardous or other wastes with Parties or non-Parties, provided that the provisions are “no less environmentally sound” than those of the Basel Convention (Article 11).

Parties are under an obligation to take the appropriate measures to ensure that transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and other wastes are only allowed if one of the three following conditions is met (Article 4 paragraph 9):

- the State of export does not have the **technical capacity** and the necessary **facilities, capacity or suitable disposal sites** to dispose of the wastes in question in an “environmentally sound manner”; or
- the wastes are needed as **raw material** for recycling or recovery industries in the State of import; or
- the movement is in accordance with **other criteria** decided by the Parties.

The control system for transboundary movements of wastes is the cornerstone of the Basel Convention. Based on the concept of prior informed consent, it requires that, before an export may take place, the authorities of the State of export notify the authorities of all the States concerned (prospective States of import and transit), providing them with detailed information on the intended movement. The movement may only proceed if and when all States concerned have given their written consent (Articles 6 and 7). The Basel Convention also requires cooperation between Parties, ranging from exchange of information on issues relevant to the implementation of the Convention to technical assistance, particularly to developing countries (Articles 10 and 13). The Secretariat is required to facilitate and support Parties, including acting as a clearing-house (Article 16). The Convention makes specific provisions for transboundary movements of hazardous wastes or other wastes that cannot be completed as foreseen and imposes a duty to re-import into the State of export (Article 8). Article 9 also makes specific provision for cases of illegal traffic and how these are to be taken back or otherwise disposed of.

The Convention also provides for the establishment of regional or sub-regional centres for training and technology transfer regarding the management of hazardous wastes and other wastes and the minimization of their generation to cater to the specific needs of different regions and subregions (Article 14).

Furthermore, Parties also have an obligation to minimize the quantities of wastes that are transported, to treat and dispose of wastes as close as possible to their place of generation and to prevent or minimize the generation of wastes at source. The Cartagena Declaration on the prevention, minimization and recovery of hazardous wastes and other wastes emphasized that prevention and minimization of hazardous wastes and other wastes at source is a critical stage of the waste management hierarchy and declared a commitment to enhancing the active promotion and implementation of more efficient strategies to achieve prevention and minimization of the generation of hazardous wastes and other wastes and their disposal.

(a) Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the implementation of the SDGs under review in the 2021 HLPF from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body, bearing in mind the interlinkages with other SDGs

The COVID-19 pandemic has had many adverse implications for waste management. There were rapid changes in the amounts and types of waste being generated, and some waste management authorities faced challenges in managing it in environmentally sound ways. There were direct impacts – in particular, a big increase in the amount of clinical waste being generated – and indirect impacts such as disruption to the arrangements for collection and handling waste, including transboundary movements. These impacts differed from one country to the next depending on: local circumstances; the severity of the pandemic; the way waste was managed; and the capacity and flexibility of available waste management systems. From the viewpoint of the Basel Convention, the Covid-19 pandemic had serious implications across the three pillars of the Convention, namely: control of transboundary movements; environmentally sound management; and prevention and minimization of the generation of waste.

Effects of COVID-19 on the prevention and minimization of the generation of hazardous and other waste

- A significant increase in the volume of clinical waste being generated in hospitals and other health care facilities, including highly infectious waste, other infection and pathological waste, sharps waste, pharmaceutical and cytotoxic waste, face masks, chemical waste, and general healthcare waste arising both from patients and from healthcare workers treating them and wearing personal protective equipment. In addition, vaccination programmes will generate an enormous number of single-use plastic syringes.
- The widespread use of facemasks by the public, often containing plastics, often used only once and possibly contaminated.
- Changes in working patterns (for example, working from home) or in shopping habits (for example, the growth in internet shopping) impacted on patterns of waste generation.
- Efforts to prevent and minimize the generation of plastic waste by tackling its sources, for example by switching to alternative materials, suffered a setback in some areas. Demand for single use plastics increased in packaging (for example, for home deliveries) and in face masks.

Effect of COVID-19 on the environmentally sound management of hazardous and other waste

- Waste management systems were under severe pressure as a result of handling potentially contaminated waste. While some countries were able to cope (for example by increasing the number of waste facilities able to handle such waste), others faced difficulties. Responses such as prioritizing medical waste may have led to a consequent reduction in the capacity to handle other types of wastes, allowing more waste facilities to handle infectious medical waste, and increasing the capacity to store medical waste. Government organizations published guidance and advice to waste collection organizations or to the public to encourage waste minimization and segregation.
- During the early stages of the pandemic, and in the absence of scientific information about the risk, some authorities adopted the approach that all waste from health care facilities was potentially contaminated with COVID and so should automatically be treated as hazardous. Wastes management systems designed on the basis of wastes being segregated according to risk were overwhelmed by the volume of unsorted waste.
- Increased volumes of household waste put additional pressure on collection, recycling and disposal system. In some regions, the advice was to stop all collection and recycling activities altogether.
- There were instances of disruptions to the normal systems of collecting, recycling and other disposal of waste due to the effects of lockdown measures. Recycling and waste management centres were often closed, or access was restricted, and municipal waste collections systems were often amended as part of measures to maintain social distancing or to keep workers safe. Also, the number of workers on sick leave led to reduced collections/inability to ensure waste collection and management in some cases.
- Formal medium and small sized recycling and disposal facilities often face challenges, as they are not able to operate at normal capacity and thus may be forced out of business at a time when their services may in fact be more in demand.

- Recycling rates for plastics fell significantly, owing partly to the historically low oil price (itself partly a consequence of the pandemic) so that the cost of virgin resin has been reduced significantly compared to the cost of recycled resin.
- The informal sector has been impacted particularly heavily: informal waste pickers undertake a significant share of the collection of wastes in some countries, in particular plastic waste, in many developing countries. Working with little societal or personal protection, informal waste collectors face a double risk: to their livelihoods, because they cannot work or can only work at reduced capacity; and to their health, as they often do not have access – or lack the necessary awareness – to protective equipment and/or to adequate government support. The poor and marginalized are among those worst impacted by both COVID-19 and environmental harms, such as plastic pollution, which directly and indirectly threaten the full and effective enjoyment of all human rights including the rights to life, water and sanitation, food, health, and housing.
- The increase in clinical waste due to the COVID-19 pandemic has almost certainly created opportunities for organized crime groups to traffic and illegally dispose of clinical waste.¹

Effects of COVID-19 on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous and other waste

- Some countries decided to prohibit or restrict imports of certain wastes or to close borders for a period of time and alternatives for the environmentally sound management needed to be found – either by expanding local capacity, or by finding alternative countries able and willing to accept imports and changing shipping routes (often at an additional cost).
- Options to export waste to countries with adequate facilities were limited. For example, many European facilities closed or operated at limited capacity. Countries that lack facilities for adequate waste management and relied on the export of plastic waste for environmentally sound treatment and disposal in other countries faced particular difficulties as transboundary movements were at some cases obstructed by lockdowns and other related measures. On the other hand, those at the receiving end also operated at lower capacities, as other regions remain in lockdown resulting in lower demand for such services capacity.

While faced with these challenges, Parties needed to rapidly adapt their practices and policies. Principles of environmentally sound management of waste of the Basel Convention remain particularly relevant in crisis situations. For example, the Convention encourages the treatment of waste as close as possible to the point of generation, and Parties have an obligation to take measures to ensure the availability of adequate disposal facilities for the environmentally sound management located to the extent possible within them, whatever the place of disposal. Many countries did rapidly expand their domestic capacity for handling waste.

¹ <https://www.europol.europa.eu/newsroom/news/covid-19-waste-crime-europe-wide-operation-to-tackle-unlawful-sanitary-waste-disposal>

In light of the experience from the COVID-19 pandemic and reflecting on the past involvement in responding to emergencies, the Secretariat has prepared a technical paper on the role of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions in supporting Parties in Prevention, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery.

(b) Actions, policy guidance, progress, challenges and areas requiring urgent attention in relation to the SDGs and to the theme within the area under the purview of your intergovernmental body

Under the Basel Convention there are a number of areas which are being addressed by the Convention as these represent significant global environmental challenges requiring urgent attention. Such areas are the focus of policy guidance from Parties, calls upon Parties and others to take measures, and may result in technical assistance and partnerships by the Secretariat. Directly relevant to the goal 12 “Sustainable consumption and production”, with relevance to goal 3 “Good health and well-being”, goal 6 “Clean water and sanitation”, goal 11 “Sustainable cities and communities”, goal 14 “Life below water”, and goal 17 “Partnerships”, some of these areas are presented below:

- **E-waste**

Electronic and electrical waste (e-waste) continues to be the fastest growing hazardous waste stream and the scale of the challenge is expanding with over 53 million metric tonnes (Mt) annually generated worldwide today and with 74 million Mt expected to be generated by 2030. Only 17 per cent of e-waste generated are currently collected and recycled which means that the fate of the majority of this waste is unknown with a risk of it ending up in countries with no facilities for managing them in an environmentally sound manner. New and emerging technologies such as 5G while contributing to digitalization and wellbeing of people are expected to add complexity to the management of e-waste.

This is problematic from the environmental and health point of view. If not managed in the environmentally sound manner, hazardous substances contained in e-waste contaminate soil, pollute water and enter the food chain. Furthermore, over two thirds of the 20 designated critical raw materials are found in e-waste and if these are collected and recycled, they can contribute to the production of new devices and limit costly and environmentally harmful extraction of new materials. “Urban” mining of e-waste as opposed to traditional mining can contribute to a net saving of 15 Mt of CO₂ per year.

The Basel Convention provides a global framework to ensure e-waste is managed in an environmentally sound manner and to control its transboundary movements. National legislation, clear definitions of e-waste, and institutional arrangements for inter-agency joint enforcement are among key elements for successfully managing e-waste at the national level. Developing countries which may not have sufficient capacities for environmentally sound and safe management of e-waste need to be protected from unwanted imports.

The export of hazardous e-waste, including waste consumer devices, computer monitors and printed circuit boards, to developing countries raised high concern as in many

instances, these exports created situations of environmental and health risks in the States of import. Some of the exports did not comply with the control procedure of the Basel Convention and were deemed to be illegal traffic, which Parties consider criminal. At the same time, the unsound management of e-waste, whether it is imported as used, near end-of-life equipment or e-waste or generated domestically has been a challenge for human health and the environment for a number of years. Guidance was developed on the environmentally sound management of waste mobile phones and computing equipment by two partnership initiatives under the Basel Convention, respectively MPPI and PACE². Parties provided policy guidance by adopting improved technical guidelines on the import/export on e-waste and used equipment³. These were intended to provide Parties with more means to control imports and exports, with criteria and suggested documentation which should help prevent illegal traffic of e-waste and used equipment.

As another tool to support Parties to tackle the e-waste challenge is the 2019 decision by the Basel Convention to re-launch the Partnership for Action on Computing Equipment, opening a second phase of its work. The Follow up Partnership to the Partnership for Action on Computing Equipment is a public – private multi-stakeholder platform which aims to support developing countries in tackling the growing e-waste challenge, focusing on new solutions for enhancing the environmentally sound management of e-waste and the overall compliance with the Basel Convention.

- **Plastic waste**

As noted by the United Nations Environment Assembly and the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention, the high and rapidly increasing levels of marine plastic litter and microplastics represent a serious environmental problem at a global scale. Plastic waste requires urgent global action and is one of the highest priority considerations under the Basel Convention. Plastic waste negatively affects marine biodiversity, ecosystems, fisheries, maritime transport, recreation and tourism, and local societies and economies. It poses a threat to the environment, to livelihoods of coastal communities and potentially to human health. The problem is multidimensional, including the widespread disposal of single-use plastics and other items as litter and the uncontrolled transboundary movement of plastic wastes.

To address this global challenge, in May 2019, the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention decided to enhance the control of plastic waste by amending the Convention

² Information and guidance developed under the Mobile Phones Partnership Initiative (MPPI) available at: <http://www.basel.int/Implementation/TechnicalAssistance/Partnerships/MPPI/Overview/tabid/3268/Default.asp> ; Information and guidance developed under Partnership for Action on Computing Equipment (PACE) available at <http://www.basel.int/Implementation/TechnicalAssistance/Partnerships/MPPI/Overview/tabid/3268/Default.aspx>

³ Technical guidelines on transboundary movements of electrical and electronic waste and used electrical and electronic equipment, in particular regarding the distinction between waste and non-waste under the Basel Convention (2019).

through the adoption of decision BC-14/12, expanding and clarifying the categories of plastic waste falling within the scope of the Basel Convention and the specific conditions under which plastic waste is subject to the prior informed consent (PIC) procedure. As of 1 January 2021, all plastic waste, including mixtures of plastic waste, and plastic waste characterized as hazardous are subject to the PIC procedure, with the exception of plastic waste that is not hazardous, destined for recycling in an environmentally sound manner and almost free from contamination and other types of wastes.

The amendments as such do not imply a ban on the import, transit or export of plastic waste but rather a clarification of when and how the Convention applies to such waste. They will have a significant impact on the rules governing the movement of plastic waste across international boundaries. They will also help ensure the environmentally sound management of plastic waste and help prevent and minimize the generation of plastic waste. The amendments make the Basel Convention the only global legally binding instrument that currently and specifically addresses plastic waste.

To strengthen the capacities of Parties to control transboundary movements, ensure environmentally sound management and minimize the generation of plastic waste, the Conference of the Parties has decided on a range of further actions to address plastic waste. This includes the establishment of the Basel Convention Plastic Waste Partnership, which was established to mobilize business, government, academic and civil society resources, interests and expertise to improve and promote the environmentally sound management of plastic waste at the global, regional and national levels and to prevent and minimize its generation⁴. Additional guidance on how to ensure, more generally, the environmentally sound management of waste as well as waste prevention and minimization is available in the ESM toolkit. Equally important is the launch of additional technical and legal work:

- on how to develop an inventory of plastic wastes;
- on the updating of the technical guidelines on the identification and environmentally sound management of plastic wastes and for their disposal;
- to consider whether any additional constituents or characteristics in relation to plastic waste should be added to Annexes I or III, respectively, to the Convention.

- **Enforcement**

In 2021 Parties still face challenges related to the enforcement of the Basel Convention. Parties face situations when they receive shipments of wastes that they never agreed to or that they are unable to properly dispose of. This happens for various reasons, including when the control procedures for the transboundary movements of hazardous and other waste as clearly set up by the Basel Convention are not respected (no notification or consent

⁴ For more information see the website of the Basel Convention:
<http://www.basel.int/Implementation/Plasticwaste/PlasticWastePartnership/tabid/8096/Default.aspx>

as set out in the Convention), consent to the movement is obtained through falsification, fraud and misrepresentation (false declarations). The Basel Convention considers such cases as illegal traffic. Illegal traffic also encompasses any movement that does not conform in a material way with the documents or that results in deliberate disposal e.g. dumping in breach of the Convention and of general principles of international law. In fact, the Basel Convention is one of the few multilateral environmental agreements to provide that Parties consider such activity as “criminal” (Article 4(5)). The Convention requires all Parties to prevent and punish conduct in contravention of its provisions, including illegal traffic. Parties also have an obligation to introduce appropriate legislation to prevent and punish illegal traffic.

Challenges related to the enforcement are related to, among other things, distinguishing second-hand goods from waste, determining whether wastes in questions are hazardous or non-hazardous, and identifying and targeting suspicious shipments. In some cases, exporters do not declare the goods as waste, even though they should be considered waste (for example, if the equipment is non-functional, is not properly packaged or is intended for disposal). Selecting the shipments to be inspected should be the result of a systematic process resulting from the analysis of collected information and intelligence, and the development of profiles. This approach requires knowledge and resources, which may be lacking, particularly in developing countries.

Lack of coordination at the national level poses problems not only in the area of enforcement of waste-related legislation, but also for the sound management of chemicals and waste in general. Preventing and detecting illegal traffic of waste requires the expertise of different ministries and agencies. Cooperation between environment agencies, customs, port authorities, and port police is crucial and mechanisms for cooperation and information exchange must be strengthened. Agencies responsible for health and occupational safety issues and national security should also play a role in effective enforcement of laws and regulations preventing the illegal traffic of waste.

Another challenge related to the enforcement and the implementation of the Basel Convention is related to delays in the prior informed consent procedure on the ground. In this regard electronic approaches to this procedure have the potential to facilitate transboundary movements and prevent and combat illegal traffic. Information sharing and lessons learned from the current electronic systems available at the national government, multilateral environmental agreements and international organizations is being collected with the purpose of reaching a shared understanding of the possible options for the approach that Parties may consider with regard to the electronic approaches to the notification and movement documents under the Basel Convention.

- **Compliance with the reporting obligation and other obligations for transmitting information**

A majority of the Parties to the Basel Convention continue to appear to have at least minimum capacity institutional capacity to implement these obligations under the Convention. According to the findings of the Committee administering the Mechanism for Promoting Implementation and Compliance with the Basel Convention and the final evaluation of the Strategic Framework undertaken in 2020, the reporting submission rate for the year 2016 is 61% which is a 10% increase compared to the 2012 data. Among the key challenges resulting in a failure to transmit information under the Convention are the lack of availability of data and information, inadequate legal and institutional frameworks, lack of capacity, lack of understanding of the usefulness of the information reported, lack of consequences in case of the non-transmission of information, and low political priority of the issues at hand. The Basel Convention has a range of mechanisms and activities available to support Parties in taking the necessary measures to enable the transmission of required information, among which are primarily technical assistance and capacity development facilitated by the Secretariat and the regional centres, and support provided through the subsidiary bodies. The Committee administering the Mechanism for Promoting Implementation and Compliance with the Basel Convention is specifically mandated to support Parties in implementing their obligations to transmit information. The Mechanism is of a facilitative nature and has, since its establishment in 2002, assisted 29 Parties⁵ in restoring their compliance with obligations to transmit information under the Convention, including the national reporting obligation set out in paragraph 3 of Article 13 of the Convention and the obligation to designate country contacts pursuant to Article 5 of the Convention. As part of its current programme of work for 2020-2021, the Committee considered the matter of integrating national reporting needs into the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework and has made several recommendations thereof to the Conference of the Parties for consideration at its fifteenth meeting, including calling on Parties with reporting needs identified through the classification of compliance performance undertaken by the Committee with respect to national reporting for the years 2016 and 2017, to integrate actions to address their needs with respect to the implementation of the Convention into the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework.⁶

- **Evaluation of the strategic framework for the implementation of the Basel Convention**

The strategic framework for the implementation of the Basel Convention for 2012–2021 was adopted by the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties through decision BC-10/2. The framework aims at protecting human health and the environment by controlling

⁵ Afghanistan, the Bahamas, Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Cabo Verde, Central African Republic, Chad, the Cook Islands, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Gabon, Guinea Bissau, Liberia, Libya, Mauritania, Nauru, Nicaragua, the Niger, Oman, Palau, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Sao Tome and Principe, the Somalia, Sudan, the Syrian Arab Republic, Togo and Turkmenistan. For more information, see <http://www.basel.int/Implementation/LegalMatters/Compliance/SpecificSubmissionsActivities/tabid/2310/Default.aspx>

⁶ Documents UNEP/CHW.15/12 and UNEP/CHW.15/INF/13.

transboundary movements of hazardous and other wastes and by ensuring and strengthening the environmentally sound management of such wastes.

The strategic framework consists of a vision, guiding principles, strategic goals and objectives, means of implementation, indicators for measuring achievement and performance and evaluation. Parties are encouraged to take specific actions to implement the strategic framework.

The final evaluation of the strategic framework is to be undertaken by the Conference of the Parties at its fifteenth meeting on the basis of a report⁷ assessing progress made under the Convention in reaching the goals and objectives of the strategic framework, as per the related indicators set out therein, comparing data from 2011 to 2019.

The report set out findings, conclusions and recommendations which provides holistic feedback on key areas of interventions and work of the Convention that the Conference of the Parties will consider as part of its general review of the implementation of the Convention at its fifteenth meeting, as mandated under specific COP decisions.

With regard to Goal 3 of the framework pertaining to Promoting the implementation of ESM of hazardous and other wastes as an essential contribution to the attainment of sustainable livelihood, the Millennium Development Goals and the protection of human health and the environment, the report indicates, from the information available, that there is currently little activity under the Basel Convention related to assisting Parties to integrate waste management issues into national sustainable development strategies. However, a first mandate has been given to the Implementation and Compliance Committee with respect to national reporting and the Development Frameworks (as described above). The report highlights that an improved methodology is necessary to provide data which is critical to measuring progress under the Convention and for the SDGs. One of the recommendations of the report is for the Conference of the Parties to consider providing guidance on how individual Parties can integrate their needs under the Basel Convention into their Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.

- **Cooperation and coordination between the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions**

Cooperation and coordination among the three conventions has become a standard manner of conducting business under the three conventions, through a series of decisions adopted by each of the respective conferences of the Parties to the conventions. This so-called "synergies process" aims to strengthen the implementation of the three conventions at the national, regional and global levels by providing coherent policy guidance, enhancing efficiency in the provision of support to Parties to the conventions, reducing their administrative burden and maximizing the effective and efficient use of resources at all levels, while maintaining the legal autonomy of these three multilateral environmental agreements. This unique approach is a successful example to other parts of the global

⁷ UNEP/CHW.15/3/Add.1 and UNEP/CHW.15/INF/5.

environmental agenda and demonstrates how to enhance international environmental governance through coordination and cooperation.

This process has changed the way in which the implementation of the conventions is undertaken at the national and regional levels. Parties to the conventions and entities supporting countries in the implementation of the conventions, such as regional centres, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, also undertook efforts to increase coherence in the implementation of the conventions.

There are linkages between actions mandated by the COP of each of the conventions and the UN Environment Assembly (UNEA) which sets priorities for global environmental policies. The Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions cooperates with the United Nations Environment Programme on issues of common interest, such as chemicals and waste management, SDGs implementation and reporting, marine pollution, environmental governance, as mandated by UNEA ministerial declaration and resolutions and COPs decisions.

It is my expectation that the Basel Convention and its Conference of the Parties will bring concrete measures and actions on hazardous and other wastes in the upcoming decade addressing global emerging environmental challenges. To support Parties in the implementation of the obligations under the Basel Convention, raising the profile and visibility of hazardous and other waste on the national level will be critical in the upcoming decade to have the required achievements.

(c) An assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind” at the global, regional and national levels against of background of the COVID-19 pandemic in achieving the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, within the respective area addressed by your intergovernmental bodies

On the global level, the Basel Convention serves to protect human health and the environment within its Parties from the negative impacts of hazardous and other wastes. The Convention also obliges its Parties to ensure that hazardous and other wastes are managed and disposed of in an environmentally sound manner. To this end, Parties are expected to minimize the quantities that are moved across borders, to treat and dispose of wastes as close as possible to their place of generation and to prevent or minimize the generation of wastes at source. Strong controls have to be applied from the moment of generation of hazardous and other waste falling under the Convention through all stages of its movement and management including its storage, transport, treatment, reuse, recycling, recovery and final disposal.

Gender issues related to implementation of the conventions have been discussed and taken into account by the Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, particularly the impact of poor management of hazardous chemicals and wastes on vulnerable groups such as women and young children.

The adverse effects of chemicals and waste on different groups of population vary depending on the level of exposure, behavioral patterns, age, biological effect (e.g., endocrine disruption),

geographical location, nutritional status and co-exposure to other chemicals. Certain types of chemicals, such as persistent organic pollutants can build up to dangerous levels in humans and wildlife causing adverse reproductive, developmental, immunological, hormonal, and carcinogenic effects with varied impacts on vulnerable groups of the population. Children are particularly susceptible to the negative health impacts of chemicals due to their rapid growth and development and greater exposure relative to body weight. They are exposed to chemicals in the womb, during their most sensitive developmental phase, and later born into a world polluted by chemicals. Breastfeeding can transfer further toxic chemicals from mother to child. Prenatal and early childhood exposure to lead, for instance, can result in demonstrable decreased intelligence and alterations in attention and behavior that are irreversible and result in diminished economic and social productivity over the entire lifespan of the affected person.

(d) Various measures and policy recommendations on building an inclusive and effective path for the achievement of the 2030 Agenda in the context of the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development

There are a number of measures and policy recommendations⁸ within the mandate of the Basel Convention which will support Parties in accelerating progress for those affected by hazardous and other wastes. In light of enhancing coordination and cooperation of the implementation between the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, some of the recommendations address all three conventions:

- 1) To call for Parties to increase their efforts on the implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions with the purpose of protecting human health and the environment and in support of circular economy and resource efficiency.
- 2) To increase efforts of governments and stakeholders towards the coordinated implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions including through multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms.
- 3) Given the cross-cutting nature of hazardous chemicals and waste in our lives, to promote an integrated approach to chemicals and waste management by mainstreaming chemicals and wastes issues into plans and strategies on sustainable development, health, agriculture and other sectors.
- 4) To promote the adoption of best practices on the sound management of hazardous chemical and wastes throughout the value chain, including extended producer responsibility, publicly available information about chemical hazards and risks, green design and best available techniques and best environmental practices, and monitoring of contamination of air, water and land by hazardous chemicals and wastes.

⁸ Please see reports and decisions of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention:
<http://www.basel.int/TheConvention/ConferenceoftheParties/ReportsandDecisions/tabid/3303/Default.aspx>

- 5) To provide safe and decent jobs involving hazardous chemicals and waste in manufacturing, design, processes and productions, including resources recovery and recycling.
- 6) Emphasizing the important role that the Basel Convention plays in addressing the high and rapidly increasing levels of plastic wastes and microplastics, to urge Parties to commit themselves to support efforts to achieve the prevention, the minimization and the environmentally sound management of plastic waste, as well as the effective control of its transboundary movements.
- 7) Given the complexity and accelerating growth of e-waste, to intensify efforts of Parties in addressing e-wastes through its environmentally sound management and controlling its transboundary movements using a circular approach and positive contribution to climate change.
- 8) To call upon Parties, in particular those with reporting needs to integrate their needs with respect to the implementation of the Basel Convention into the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework, in particular during the national development planning process.
- 9) To promote knowledge building and information sharing on hazardous chemicals and wastes, including chemicals in products through labeling and other methods, for the better management and risk reduction throughout their lifecycle.
- 10) To encourage efforts of Parties to promote gender equality to ensure that women and men from all Parties are equally involved in the implementation of the three conventions and are represented in their bodies and processes and thus inform and participate in decision-making on gender-responsive hazardous chemicals and wastes policies.

(e) Key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2021 HLPF

- 1) To recognize the importance of multilateral environmental agreements on hazardous chemicals and wastes, including the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and their critical role in the overarching architecture of environmental governance in building post-COVID-19 a resilient path to achieve the Agenda 2030.
- 2) To recognize the role of the Basel Convention as the only global legally binding instrument that currently and specifically addresses plastic waste.
- 3) To accelerate efforts of Parties to implement their obligations under the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions to protect human health and the environment from adverse impacts of chemicals and hazardous and other wastes.

- 4) To mainstream the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions into plans and strategies on sustainable development, health, agriculture and other sectors and in the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks.
- 5) To emphasize the importance of data transmission in accordance with the obligations under the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions to avoid non-reporting, incomplete reporting or late reporting and add value to the global indicator framework for the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
- 6) To promote knowledge building and information sharing on hazardous chemicals and wastes for better management and risk reduction throughout their lifecycle.