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Forum and Economic and Social Council**

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**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**

## **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 of February 2024, it has 191 Parties and thus its coverage is global and almost universal. 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 centre 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 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 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, according to the specific needs of different regions and subregions (Article 14).

***(a) Impacts of multiple crises on the implementation of SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17 from the vantage point of your intergovernmental body***

Multiple major economic and social crises ranging from the severe impacts of climate change, lasting effects from the COVID-19 pandemic, economic shocks, and armed conflicts around the globe, have had a negative impact on the implementation of the sustainable development goals in the context of the management of hazardous and other wastes.

*Impacts of multiple crisis on the environmentally sound management of hazardous waste:*

One of the key pillars of the Basel Convention is the environmentally sound management (ESM) of waste which includes a minimum baseline that Parties must meet, and can help implement the SDGs, notably those under review.

However, multiple crises, notably living crises, natural disasters and armed conflicts have impacted the implementation and efficiency of the ESM of hazardous and other wastes:

- The living crisis in many countries around the world heightens the risk of exposure to hazardous waste, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable populations (SDG 1). Communities grappling with poverty already face heightened susceptibility to the effects and proximity of hazardous wastes due to their socio-economic circumstances. Indeed, urban areas often concentrate impoverished populations near landfills, hazardous waste disposal sites, incinerators, and industrial zones.<sup>1</sup> Living crises amplify the risk of an increase in impoverished populations living in vicinity to hazardous waste and being exposed to harmful substances.
- The increase in climate disasters, such as floods or cyclones, triggered by anthropological emissions has led to more risks of spills of hazardous chemicals and waste which, in turn, can impact waterways and other primary resources on which the poorest rely for their livelihoods, especially to achieve SDG 2 on ending hunger. Nearly a billion households, particularly the rural poor, rely directly on natural resources for their livelihood. When land is contaminated, it can lead to illnesses and interfere with populations' abilities to have access to food that is safe to consume and drinkable water. This is a particularly pressing problem when considering that there were record levels of acute food insecurities in 2023.<sup>2</sup>
- Armed conflicts and wars are another obstacle to the protection and environmentally sound management of natural resources and hazardous substances. Direct hits and explosions result in leakages of hazardous materials that poison air, water, and soils. In any war or armed conflict, the toxic trail is left upon generations, well after the conflict is over. Moreover, conflicts commonly produce environmental impacts beyond their borders, including toxic chemical trails. This has long lasting consequences on SDGs, notably SDGs 1 and 2 (ending poverty and hunger). Land degradation may impact quality of food and water which in turn can increase poverty in a region or country during and in the aftermath of wars. It may also have consequences on SDG 16 as

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<sup>1</sup> [Inequalities, inequities, environmental justice in waste management and health | European Journal of Public Health | Oxford Academic \(oup.com\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> [Global food crisis: what you need to know in 2023 - European Commission \(europa.eu\)](#)

securing peace and justice is more difficult in contexts where basic needs such as access to food and water are not being met.

*Impacts of multiple crises on the prevention and minimization of the generation of hazardous and other waste*

Crises around the world can impact waste prevention and minimization. Crises, such as armed conflicts, can lead to a higher generation of wastes or pollution, and create a practical barrier or delay for transboundary movements and overall management of waste where approval from all states involved is needed. Moreover, environmentally sound management, including the prevention and minimization, of hazardous waste is often not a priority after a climate catastrophe or in a post-war economy.

*Effects of multiple crises on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous and other wastes*

Environmental, social or economic crises can cause disruptions to national institutions and the implementation of – what can be – highly technical and complex frameworks. Control of the transboundary movements of hazardous and other waste, information exchange strategies, technology strategies and regulatory controls are all examples of what can be impeded by an ongoing conflict or natural disaster. Covid-19 associated lockdowns, temporary reduction in recycling capacities, disruptions of transboundary movements all negatively impact the transboundary movements of and environmentally sound management of hazardous and other wastes.

In this context, threats from pre-existing and new pollution are amplified. In turn, this can impact the sound implementation of the SDGs, notably those under review. It is also worth noting that countries which are most at risk of the impacts of climate change are most often also the countries facing the highest risks of toxic pollution.<sup>3</sup>

***(b) Three key areas where sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions for achieving the SDGs are being effectively delivered, especially related to the cluster of SDGs under review in 2024, bearing in mind the three dimensions of sustainable development and the interlinkages across the Goals and targets:***

Sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions for achieving the SDGs are being effectively delivered through different activities led by the Basel Convention.

- (1) **International cooperation and coordination** is an important area of work of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions.

The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) conventions each have a mandate promoting international cooperation and coordination with competent international organizations and intergovernmental and non-governmental bodies. The 2023 Conference of the Parties decisions on international cooperation gave a mandate to the Secretariat to enhance cooperation with specific international bodies, such as the Minamata Convention on Mercury,

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<sup>3</sup> [New study confirms relationship between toxic pollution, climate risks to human health | ScienceDaily](#)

Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals; Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change; 10 Year Framework of Programmes on Sustainable Consumption and Production Patterns; UNEP: the intergovernmental negotiating Committee on the plastic treaty, an hoc open-ended working group on a science-policy panel, the Global Framework on Chemicals, and the United Nations Environment Assembly and its resolutions and with over 70 other organizations and areas as listed in the report by the Secretariat on international cooperation and coordination. <sup>4</sup>

Promoting action on making visible the invisible, to address the triple planetary crises on pollution, climate change and biodiversity loss, the three conferences also further strengthened the mandate for international cooperation with other organizations, including with the Convention on Biological Diversity and its Global Kunming-Montreal Biodiversity Framework, and noted that actions under the BRS conventions may contribute to achieving the objectives of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

To address this request, the BRS Secretariat contributed to the twenty-sixth Conference of the Parties of UNFCCC held in December 2023 in Dubai, the UEA. This engagement raised awareness on the necessity of global responsible trade of waste, in particular plastic wastes, promoted by international regulations, such as the Basel Convention. The Basel Convention can help protect vulnerable countries from unwanted wastes that they would not be able to manage otherwise, and therefore prevents GHG emissions from occurring.

Scientific evidence of the interlinkages between chemicals, waste and climate change calls for a holistic approach in addressing the intertwined climate and pollution crises. Integrated actions have the potential to bring co-benefits for reducing emissions of greenhouse gases and releases of pollutants. Further raising the profile of the environmentally sound management of and the control of hazardous and other waste promotes a holistic approach to addressing the triple planetary crisis and meeting the goals under the SDGs, in particular SDG 13 on climate action.

In the past year a high number of events and initiatives took place, including on highlighting the linkages between on one hand, pollution stemming from hazardous chemicals and wastes and on the other hand climate change and biodiversity loss<sup>5</sup>.

## **(2) Basel Convention Partnership programme**

Back in 2006 the eighth meeting of the Conference of the Parties has established a formal Partnership Programme. Partnerships in the Basel context refer to multi-stakeholder cooperative arrangements including governments and other stakeholders. “Partnerships” (internationally but also nationally within Parties) have been identified by the Conference of the Parties as one of the means to achieve the goals of the Convention. The Basel Convention partnerships are implemented in line with SDG 17. Flagship Partnerships include the Partnership for Action on Challenges relating to E-waste (PACE II), the Environmental

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<sup>4</sup> UNEP/CHW.16/INF/37–UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.11/INF/20–UNEP/POPS/COP.11/INF/41.

<sup>5</sup> See the reports at the website:

<http://www.brsmeas.org/Implementation/MediaResources/PressReleases/Climatechangeandchemicalswaste/tabid/8874/language/en-US/Default.aspx> and <https://www.brsmeas.org/biodiversity-report/>

Network for Optimizing Regulatory Compliance on Illegal Traffic (ENFORCE), the Household Waste Partnership, and the Plastic Waste Partnership.

These networks and partnerships are ways in which the Secretariat encourages communication, the exchange of best practices and information on a wide variety of topics linked to the Basel Convention. A concrete example of this is the upcoming ENFORCE publication where members of the networks will share examples of best practices regarding tackling and mitigating the risks and preventing and combatting illegal traffic. Under the Plastic Waste Partnership members launched a Forum on Extended Producer Responsibility for Plastic Wastes to showcase solutions to challenges encountered by Parties and other stakeholders in implementing EPR schemes and to promote collaboration and knowledge exchange in the forum. PACE II is striding ahead with addressing additional types of e-waste and working towards developing a guidance on television screens, screens, video and audio equipment on the one hand, and on refrigerators, cooling and heating equipment on the other hand, with the latter contributing to the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer. Under the Household Waste Partnership, members are developing an overall guidance document on the environmentally sound management of household waste for consideration by the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention.

Enhancing cooperation and partnership through these different initiatives can also help achieve SDG 16 on peace and security by enhancing communication and exchanges between parties within and outside their respective regions.

### **3) Technical assistance and capacity building on plastic wastes**

As part of its technical assistance, the Secretariat is currently implementing various projects to strengthen capacities for the control of transboundary movements, environmentally sound management (ESM), and prevention and minimization of the generation of plastic waste.

On prevention and minimization of marine litter and microplastics, the project ‘Marine litter and microplastics: promoting the environmentally sound management of plastic waste and achieving the prevention and minimization of the generation of plastic waste’ (BRS-Norad-1), was successfully implemented in Ghana and Sri Lanka where capacity on ESM of plastic waste was strengthened through a series of activities (plastic waste inventories, legal and infrastructure assessments, ESM strategies, etc.) and pilot projects in different sectors and local communities.

Building upon the BRS-Norad-1 project, the project ‘Further actions to address plastic waste under the Basel Convention’ (BRS-Norad-2) aims to assist partner countries to improve their management of plastic waste and ultimately contribute to Sustainable Development Goal target 14.1. Among other activities, through BRS-Norad-2, the pilot projects in Ghana and Sri Lanka will be further implemented and strengthened.

The project ‘Plastic Waste in Remote and Mountainous Areas’ currently being implemented in six countries aims to prevent and minimize plastic waste and to ensure its environmentally sound management (ESM) in remote and mountainous areas through awareness raising, educational and pilot activities .

The project ‘Strengthening knowledge and capacity to prevent and reduce releases of plastic waste in Malawi and Zimbabwe’ (NREF-1) aims to protect human health and the environment from plastic waste by strengthening knowledge and capacity among decision makers in Malawi and Zimbabwe. In addition, the upcoming project “Environmentally sound plastic

management” (NREF-2) is in the final stage of preparation for the implementation of activities aiming at supporting Parties (Cambodia, Lesotho, Nepal, Rwanda, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, Zambia) on different aspects of ESM of plastic waste.

The Secretariat, in close cooperation with the Basel and Stockholm Conventions’ Regional Centres, has carried out a series of projects on plastic waste under the Small Grants Programme (SGP) on Plastic Waste. Three rounds of SGP calls for proposals were conducted, with sixteen (16) projects completed by the regional centres and additional seven (7) projects to be implemented by 2025. The projects aim to improve the management of plastic waste in partner countries and thus contributing in particular to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) targets 3.9, 5.1, 6.3 and 11.6, 12.4 and 14.1

***(c) Three examples of specific actions, policies and measures that are most urgently needed to effectively deliver sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions to eradicate poverty and reinforce the 2030 Agenda, building on interlinkages and transformative pathways for achieving the SDGs.***

- (1) **Establishment and strengthening of legal and institutional frameworks for the implementation of the Basel Convention and prevention and combatting of illegal traffic.** Developing legal frameworks is a core requirement under the Basel Convention and related multilateral environmental agreements. Establishing and strengthening legal frameworks not only contributes to effective implementation of the Convention, including to prevent and combat illegal traffic and trade in hazardous wastes, but also contributes to the achievement of SDG 16 beyond the issue of management of wastes.

Illegal traffic of hazardous and other wastes continues to be a complex issue which poses risks to the environment and human health.

The Basel Convention is one of the very few environmental treaties to define a prohibited activity as “criminal”. The fact that illegal traffic is deemed a crime that Parties undertake to prevent and punish says a lot about the international community’s commitment to the environmentally sound management of hazardous and other wastes. Illegal traffic of hazardous waste is unfortunately still very common in all corners of the world.

Preventing and combatting illegal traffic in hazardous and other waste is a challenging task requiring effective national inter-agency mechanisms, and close collaboration among Parties and regions. Indeed, cooperation with custom and other law enforcement authorities and the implementation of legal norms at all levels are needed to intercept, discourage, and prevent illegal trafficking.<sup>6</sup>

In some countries and regions where there is a lack of enforcement capacity this can be a particularly difficult task. Training, awareness, and political will of the

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<sup>6</sup> [Discussion Paper. Practical Experiences with the Basel Convention: Challenges, Good Practice and Ways to Improve Transboundary Movements of E-Waste in Low and Middle Income countries. A Collaboration between PREVENT and StEP \(prevent-waste.net\)](#)

enforcement community is needed in detection, classification, investigation, and prosecution of confirmed cases of illegal traffic.

In 2023, the Secretariat of the Basel Convention supported the ninth iteration of WCO Operation DEMETER, which targets illicit wastes, ozone depleting substances (ODS) and potent greenhouse gases. It saw the participation of a record number of 106 Customs administrations and led to the detection of a record number of 338 infringement cases.

Operation DEMETER aims to support the efforts deployed by the Customs community to implement the provisions of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal along side with the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

According to preliminary results, 338 infringement cases were reported, representing a total over 17,486 tonnes of waste and an additional 144,313 pieces of waste (unweighed). The main illicit waste streams identified involved textiles, metal, plastic, end-of-life vehicles and machinery, paper, and electronic and electrical waste (e-waste). Most of the seizures originated from Europe and were destined for Europe, Asia and Africa. Some of the seized shipments lacked the required documentation to confirm the eligible transboundary movement of waste, or were misdeclared<sup>7</sup>.

- (2) **Implementation of the Basel Convention plastic waste amendments (effective from 2021) and e-waste amendments (effective from 2025).** Parties need to take measures on developing or strengthening of national legal frameworks, setting up collection, recycling, and disposal systems, developing systems for effective collection of data and developing inventories of wastes and raise awareness of enforcement entities on the new policy requirements. Successful implementation of the Convention requires that domestic institutional responsibilities are clearly set out, that internal and external funding is available, and that technical assistance can be provided by the international community. Developing countries Parties, in particular, require capacity building support with the implementation of these new obligations under the Basel Convention.
  
- (3) **The development of Technical guidelines on the environmentally sound management of waste lead-acid batteries and technical guidelines on the environmentally sound management of other waste batteries (including li-ion batteries)** will provide new policy guidance on environmentally sound management of this important electrical and electronic waste equipment. The technical guidelines on the environmentally sound management (ESM) of waste Lead-acid batteries were initially adopted by the Basel Convention Parties in 2004. The Parties decided to update them in 2022 through the decision BC-15/11 and BC-16-6). These technical guidelines include new evidence of more severe adverse effects of lead exposure on human health and the environment as well as new policy

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<sup>7</sup> [World Customs Organization \(wcoomd.org\)](https://www.wcoomd.org)



approaches that countries can adopt to reduce labour and children exposure to lead as well as lead pollution. It was reported that 86% of the lead produced annually is employed in lead-acid batteries. The recycling of lead, extracted from waste lead-acid batteries, is driven by a global market for secondary lead which provides a very good example of circular economy. The technical guidelines will guide countries to address informal and sub-standard lead recycling, considering the WHO statement that there is no lead exposure without adverse effects on human health and the environment.

The Conference of the Parties in 2023 also decided to develop technical guidelines on other waste batteries. The technical guidelines will provide policy guidance on the ESM of various types batteries, including lithium-ion batteries. The guidelines will be an important contribution to the sound recycling of these batteries which will be essential to support the transition to electric mobility, the use renewable energy technologies, and sustainable digital transformations. The technical guidelines will disseminate existing recycling technologies and best practices which will be key in avoiding potential scarcities of minerals and metals contained in the batteries. The technical guidelines will also contribute to the sustainable management of minerals and metals along their value chains, helping countries to reduce reliance on primary extraction and reducing carbon emission. Improvements in these areas will contribute towards achieving goals under review by HLPF in 2024, in particular on poverty, ending hunger, climate change, peace and security and partnerships.

***(d) Follow-up actions and measures being undertaken by your intergovernmental body or forum to support implementation of the Political Declaration of the SDG Summit.***

There are several follow-up actions and measures within the mandate of the Basel Convention which will support Parties in accelerating progress for those affected by hazardous and other wastes, with focus on SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17.

Important steps towards building further resilience and contributions to achieving the SDGs were taken at the 2023 Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention, including the adoption of updated technical guidelines on the environmentally sound management of plastic waste and the initiation of work to improve the functioning of the Prior Informed Consent Procedure (PIC).

**(1) The adoption of updated technical guidelines on the environmentally sound management of plastic waste**

The adoption of this new measure is a major step in supporting Member States reach SDGs:

- The adoption of the updated technical guidelines for the environmentally sound management of plastic waste reflects the first global understanding of how to minimize the generation of plastic wastes and to ensure that their collection, transport and disposal minimize negative impacts on human health and the environment. The guidelines aim to address some of the legislative gaps and lead to a reduction in harmful waste disposal practices. These guidelines will also help countries build capacity to

manage waste efficiently and in an environmentally sound manner particularly when developing procedures and waste management strategies.<sup>8</sup>

- Stronger environmentally sound management with regards to plastic waste can be beneficial in addressing SDG 2. In recent years, plastic pollution's devastating impacts on biodiversity and human health have been widely recognised as a serious global environmental problem that urgently needs to be addressed worldwide. Microplastics can be found in our food and in our water. Plastics can also lead to biodiversity loss and lead to food scarcity. The environmentally sound management of plastic waste can lower the impacts of plastic waste on marine environments which can, in turn, help address food scarcity and ending hunger.
- From a climate action standpoint (SDG 13), the environmentally sound management of plastic waste can help limit illegal plastic waste trafficking particularly in developing economies, where unsustainable and unlawful waste imports add strains on their waste disposal systems and can result in open fire burning of plastic waste. In fact, open-fire burnings account for 31% of all plastic waste disposal and release black carbon aerosols which have 5,000 times the global warming potential of CO<sub>2</sub>.

## **(2) The initiation of work to improve the functioning of the Prior Informed Consent Procedure and continuation of work on its digitalization**

At its sixteenth meeting, the Conference of the Parties decided to establish a process open to all Parties and observers to identify challenges in the implementation of the PIC procedure and best practices, possible approaches, and initiatives to improve its functioning, as well as to develop recommendations on improving the functioning of the PIC procedure. This initiative is an example of promotion of cooperation and partnership efforts as per SDG 17.

The initiation of this work is an essential step in boosting the long-term effectiveness and practicality of the PIC procedure.

A separate, but closely related to this process is the work on electronic approaches to notifications and movement documents (or a digitalization of the PIC procedure) It is a crucial tool to improve effective communication among enforcement authorities which are engaged in the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes.

## **(3) Development of the new strategic framework of the Basel Convention**

According to Article 15, paragraph 7 of the Convention, the Conference of the Parties is required to undertake an evaluation of its effectiveness in light of the latest scientific, environmental, technical and economic information. The strategic framework for the implementation of the Basel Convention for the period 2012-2021 which consisted of a vision, guiding principles, strategic goals and objectives, means of implementation, indicators for measuring achievement and performance and evaluation. Following its completion, the Conference of the Parties at the sixteenth meeting agreed to develop a renewed strategic framework and established a process in this regard open to all Parties, inviting representation

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<sup>8</sup> [Summary report 1–12 May 2023 \(iisd.org\)](https://www.iisd.org)

of the five regional groups of the United Nations and to observers, including the Basel Convention regional and coordinating centres. A renewed strategic framework will be provided, for consideration and possible adoption by the Conference of the Parties at its seventeenth meeting.

***(e) Recommendations and key messages for inclusion into the Ministerial Declaration of the 2024 HLPF.***

There are a number of measures and policy recommendations<sup>9</sup> 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 recognize the importance of multilateral environmental agreements on hazardous chemicals and wastes, including the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions and its evolving role in the overarching architecture of environmental governance in building a resilient path to achieve the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda in the context of multiple crises.
- 2) To accelerate efforts of Parties to implement their obligations under the multilateral environmental agreements on hazardous chemicals and waste to protect human health and the environment from adverse impacts of chemicals and hazardous and other waste.
- 3) To continue mainstreaming the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions into plans and strategies on sustainable development, health, agriculture and other sectors and the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks in light of raising profile and visibility of chemicals and waste on the national level, thereby facilitating the integration of information and national reporting needs into such Frameworks and supporting implementation of the Conventions.
- 4) To recognize the role of the Basel Convention as the only global legally binding instrument that currently and specifically addresses plastic waste and its important contributions towards the future legally binding instrument on plastic pollution.
- 5) To promote knowledge building and information sharing on hazardous chemicals and wastes for better management and risk reduction throughout their lifecycle.
- 6) 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

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<sup>9</sup> 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>

indicator framework for the follow-up and review of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

- 7) To mainstream gender considerations in policies and strategies that promote the sound management of chemicals and waste.