



Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions

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**Food and Agriculture
Organization of the
United Nations**

Report of the Global workshop on enhancing national cooperation and coordination for the implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions

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Background and introduction

1. The global workshop on enhancing national cooperation and coordination for the implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) conventions took place from 21 to 23 June 2016 in Geneva, Switzerland concurrently with the reception organized to celebrate the 10th anniversary of the synergies process. The workshop brought together government representatives from 28 countries, experts and international and regional organizations, including the Interim Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury, the Secretariat of the Special Programme, the Secretariat of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).
2. The workshop sought to enhance synergies at the national level by supporting parties in the process of strengthening their existing national institutional structures and coordination mechanisms for the implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions within the chemicals and waste cluster. Participants exchanged best practices and experiences that they have acquired so far on the specific issues common to two or three conventions.
3. During the three days of the workshop participants were provided the opportunity to share best practices and lessons learned related to substantive and procedural issues encountered by parties in implementing the conventions. The workshop consisted of the following five sessions: (i) overview of the synergies process, (ii) strategies for national delivery as one, (iii) creating an enabling environment, (iv) synergies in thematic areas and (v) where do we go from here. The learning approach included lectures by resource persons and facilitators, simulation exercises, panel discussions and working groups with a focus on sharing experiences and lessons learned amongst participants. The workshop was made possible thanks to the generous financial support provided by the Government of Switzerland.

Session I: Overview of the synergies process

4. The objective of this session was to provide a brief overview of the synergies process at global level among the three conventions, including reasons behind initiating the process, its key milestones, achievements so far, and its evaluation. Ms. Kerstin Stendahl, Deputy Executive Secretary and former co-chair of the Ad hoc Joint Working Group (AHJWG) on Enhancing Cooperation and Coordination and Mr. Osvaldo Patricio Álvarez Pérez, First Secretary and Consul of Chile to Costa Rica and former co-chair of AHJWG discussed whether and how the synergies process can be used as an agent of change in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development given that the agenda calls for policy and institutional coherence.
5. Mr. Pérez highlighted that the synergies process was to continue to serve as an agent of change at all levels and significant progress has been achieved in the past 10 years, including by increasing visibility of three conventions on the environmental governance arena, enhancing mobilization of financing and technical assistance, supporting policy coherence on chemicals and waste issues, saving costs through enhanced efficiency in administrative arrangements and maximizing the effective and efficient use of resources at all levels.
6. Putting the BRS conventions into the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Ms. Stendahl mentioned that chemicals and waste contribute to the achievement of a number of the sustainable development goals, and associated targets and indicators. She listed specific targets and indicators for which the BRS Conventions collect fully or partially data.

Session II: Strategies for national delivery as ONE

7. This session served to set the scene for the coordinated national delivery of the BRS conventions and the consideration of what national level synergies encompass. While recognizing the principle that one size doesn't fit all, a range of possible elements and processes such as organizational changes in national management of chemicals and wastes; incorporation of chemicals and wastes issues in development planning and national strategies on sustainable development, priority setting and budgeting; harmonizing legislation to ensure policy and enforcement coherence; and also the use of a

life-cycle approach involving government and private sectors are among those that applicable in national circumstances.

8. The discussion focused on considering strategies for national delivery with the panel discussion, *Delivering as ONE at the national level: national strategies for the integrated sound management of chemicals and wastes based on a life-cycle approach*, with the panelists from Brazil, Ghana, and India.

Session III: Creating enabling environment

9. The workshop continued with session III on creating enabling environment. This session focused on the “how”, i.e. creating an enabling environment for the effective implementation of the BRS conventions. Discussion took place in working groups addressing the issues of stakeholder analysis, gender, public participation, and industry involvement, inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms, and communication of information under the conventions.
10. Working group 1A discussed *stakeholder analysis, gender, public participation, and industry involvement*. The group reported that key stakeholders which need to be engaged in the coordinated implementation of the BRS conventions are ministries, civil society organizations, children and women groups, industry, the media (social, electronic and print), and faith groups. Participant also reflected on the need to ensure representation of the informal sector. Some participants mentioned that in their countries measures have been taken serving to integrate the informal sector into the formal economy. Suggestions were made with regard to the public participation, building rapport between ministries and academia as well as extending the network of partners.
11. The working group 1B focused on *inter-ministerial coordination mechanisms*. The group stated that inter-ministerial/interagency coordination mechanisms are crucial to ensure the coordinated implementation of the BRS conventions as well as linking chemicals and wastes issues to other related sectors. In order to be fully functional and effective, such mechanisms need to have a lead ministry, legal authority to take and enforce decisions and meet on a regular basis. In some countries the lead ministry (e. g. Ministry of Environment) “facilitates” the process but doesn’t lead it *per se* which reduces the push-back from other ministries. These mechanisms should take into account the needs of the private sector/industry and support building trust with stakeholders.
12. Group 2A on *communication of information under the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions* emphasized the importance of adequate customs clearance mechanisms and reported that a number of countries face the issue of misclassification of chemicals. Some countries described their challenges related to the registration of chemicals in general, and the absence of the registration system for industrial chemicals in particular. Such registration system is required for parties to understand the scope of production and import and export of industrial chemicals in their country. When using the life-cycle approach to chemicals and waste management, attention should be given to situations when a chemical is denied from being imported or exported, because then a responsible party needs to ensure its environmentally sound disposal upon a chemical or product becoming waste.
13. Developing a database with information on chemicals and wastes listed under the conventions helps to track the number of chemicals and manufacturers as well as volumes of chemicals produced, and imported and exported. Concerned and interested stakeholders should have access to such database. Some countries shared their experiences in creating a database using trade and generic names correlated to the codes with providing access to the customs authorities. Participants also voiced their concerns about the need for more training opportunities for custom officers to combat the illegal trade of hazardous chemicals and wastes.
14. For group 2B on *data generation, and collection*, participants stressed the importance of using the existing data from reliable sources. It was noted that obtaining good data is difficult, therefore countries should accept the limitation and start using the data available while seek to improve over time. The group also noted that benefits of using a multi-stakeholder approach is collecting data from different sources. This type of work can also allow for the development of a shared database containing information regarding different aspects of the life-cycle of chemicals and waste.

Session IV: Synergies in thematic areas

15. This session focused on the “what” the synergy process addresses and zoomed into the thematic areas common across the conventions, including POPs wastes, import and export control mechanisms, national legislation for the coordinated implementation of the conventions, and data generation and collection. Discussion took place in working groups addressing the issues of POPs wastes and other issues addressed by two or three conventions, import and export control mechanisms under the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm conventions, plans and strategies and national legislation for the coordinated implementation of the BRS conventions.
16. The working group 3A on *POPs wastes and other issues addressed by two or three conventions* recalled that the Stockholm and the Basel Conventions have a joint mandate on POPs wastes and have agreed to cooperate closely on establishing levels of destruction and irreversible transformation necessary to ensure that POPs characteristics are not exhibited. The group indicated that it would be vital to coordinate efforts on POPs wastes by those responsible for the Basel and Stockholm Conventions at the national level especially that the definition of POPs wastes under Stockholm Convention is independent of Basel Convention considerations. One of the features of the POPs wastes is that it requires specific level technical capacity to manage in an environmentally sound manner as it also does to compare to hazardous waste management in general.
17. The working group 3B on *import and export control mechanisms under the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm conventions* suggested that countries should put in place strategies to make authorization procedures for import and export more efficient. This could include one window policies, online authorization/consent requests, and other measures. The group emphasized the importance of organizing training for customs to raise their awareness on hazardous chemicals and wastes and the obligations under the BRS conventions, including the control of road transport and bonds and insurances (for shipments of hazardous waste).
18. The workshop group 4A on *plans and strategies under NIPs, NAPs, Basel Convention Strategic Framework* shared experiences of different countries on coordination mechanisms, including those created for developing a NIP or NAP. For example, in Afghanistan the National Environmental Protection Agency is the lead while in Panama it is the Ministry of Health. In Vietnam, the law on chemicals assigns responsibilities to the different ministries according to the life-cycle of chemicals and as a consequence, the Ministry of Industry and Trade comes to be the focal point for PCBs under the Stockholm Convention and the focal point for industrial chemicals under the Rotterdam Convention.
19. During the discussion of group 4B on *national legislation for the coordinated implementation of the BRS conventions*, the participants discussed examples of innovative practical measures and actions that helped Parties to develop legislation that supports the coordinated implementation of the BRS conventions at the national level.

Session V: Where do we go from here

20. A number of key messages and recommendations based on the discussions held throughout the three days of the workshop have been prepared and are presented below.

Key messages

21. Synergies at the national level promote a life-cycle approach for the sound management of hazardous chemicals and wastes. Delivering as ONE the BRS conventions means putting three conventions under one umbrella, identifying and addressing gaps, and mainstreaming issues under the BRS conventions into sustainable development strategies and plans.
22. Implementation of a convention requires much more effort than ratification; in particular the mandates of the conventions need to be internalized into the national legislation and also be reflected in the mandate of an inter-ministerial/interagency coordination mechanism.

23. Stakeholder groups, including within and outside the government (industry, the civil society organizations, academia, trade unions, professional associations, media, indigenous people, and religious groups) need to be actively engaged in the implementation of the BRS conventions.
24. Triggers for developing legislation that supports the coordinated implementation of the BRS conventions are often global and national level developments. Ideally both top-down and bottom-up triggers should happen at the same time as these would be mutually reinforcing.
25. It is necessary to establish inter-ministerial multi-sector coordination mechanisms involving all relevant ministries with a mandate for the development of legislation implementing the BRS conventions. Such mechanisms should be driven by a lead ministry, have legal authority as per the national legislation, meet on a regular basis, and take into account the needs of the private sector/industry.. When establishing a coordination mechanism, the first step should be to draw up the rationale for promoting synergies and to establish a list of stakeholders with specific responsibilities of concerned ministries and agencies, followed by developing or reviewing legislation implementing the BRS conventions. Such a list or a coordination mechanism in general can be used for developing or updating the National Implementation Plan under the Stockholm Convention or other relevant plans or strategies as well as help coordinating data collection and exchange.
26. It is vital to coordinate efforts on POPs wastes by those responsible for the Basel and Stockholm Conventions at the national level especially that the definition of POPs wastes under Stockholm Convention is independent of Basel Convention considerations. From that perspective, it would be beneficial to develop and incorporate indicators for the sound management of POPs and mercury waste into the Strategic Framework under the Basel Convention.
27. Economic incentives for the sound management of chemicals and wastes (e.g. eco-tax) have the potential to generate funding which can be used for the implementation of the BRS conventions. BRS conventions can provide a business opportunity to engage the private sector while serving to meet the goal of protecting human health and the environment.
28. Parties will benefit from the Secretariat developing a database, register or another tool for banned or restricted hazardous chemicals and wastes, including information on CAS numbers, to be made available to all stakeholders, including customs. Hazardous chemicals and wastes should have appropriate HS codes, so that customs can easily recognize them. Parties should also develop a national (online) system on generation, manufacturing, imports and exports of hazardous wastes and goods, and materials containing hazardous chemicals.
29. Building and enhancing national technical capacity for data generation and evaluation, including techniques for interpolation/extrapolation remains a challenging issue for developing countries. If data is missing or not perfect, estimates should be used. Parties are encouraged to use available online portals on chemicals and wastes (e. g. CHEMportal from OECD, SPIN database).
30. Cooperation with academia at the national and international levels should be strengthened to develop the capacity on methods for data generation and evaluation in all areas of chemicals and wastes management.
31. It is important to integrate the obligations of the BRS conventions into decision-making on broader issues, e. g. which type of wastes should be recycled and which should be eliminated (based on the Basel and Stockholm Conventions requirements). Policy options for POPs waste management in the environmentally sound manner are already available: take back systems, recycling fees, waste as a raw material. The development of inventories of hazardous chemicals is important as it can serve to identify waste associated to specific chemicals.
32. Staff and analytical capacity are still lacking in developing countries to make an informed authorization of imports and exports of hazardous chemicals and to consent to transboundary movements of hazardous wastes.
33. Customs training is required to raise awareness of the sound management of hazardous chemicals and wastes and the obligations under the BRS conventions, and should address such issues as road transport control, bonds and insurances, among others. It is also important to engage the private sector, including

the shipping lines, importers, and others as well as to put in place strategies to make the authorization procedure more efficient: one window policies, online authorization/consent requests and others.

34. In terms of the delivery of technical assistance for the coordinated implementation of the BRS conventions, training should be made available in all UN languages. Also, there is high value of national level projects when one-to-one support would be provided to a party.
35. Parties should take advantage of the benefits of a regional approach and work more closely with the Basel and Stockholm Conventions regional centers (e. g. sharing information on the development of national legislations within a region).
36. The Secretariat should set up discussion groups by level of advancement on specific issues to share best practices among countries on synergetic implementation of the BRS (e. g. through the communities of practice).
37. In the spirit of consistency, activities supported by UN entities and funded by the GEF and the Special Programme should promote the coordinated implementation of the BRS conventions (e. g. the development of national legislation to enable the implementation of the BRS conventions).
38. SDGs should be used as an opportunity to build greater sustainability into activities for the sound management of chemicals and wastes and the implementation of the BRS conventions. Active engagement of the BRS parties on shaping the global agenda on the chemicals and wastes beyond 2020 is crucial.