



Contributions to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

ECOSOC functional commissions and other intergovernmental bodies and forums, are invited to share relevant input and deliberations as to how they address goals and targets from the perspective of “*Ensuring that no one is left behind*”.

Inputs could follow the following template, inspired by the report of the Secretary-General on Critical milestones towards coherent, efficient and inclusive follow-up and review at the global level (A/70/684).

Submissions will be publicly posted online at the United Nations Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, at sustainabledevelopment.un.org, as input to the 2016 meeting of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

Please send the completed form no later than **16 May 2016** to the Secretariat’s e-mail pietracci@un.org

Submission Form

1. An assessment of the situation regarding the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind” at the global level:

The Rotterdam Convention helps Parties to protect themselves against unwanted imports of hazardous chemicals. It is a global system open to all countries that allows the exchange of information between countries on trade in hazardous chemicals. Therefore, its effective implementation protects people from adverse impact of chemicals at the global level.

Furthermore, while the Rotterdam Convention reaches out to many Member States at the country level, it also plays an important role for striving toward the principle of “ensuring that no one is left behind” as millions of farmers around the globe daily use toxic pesticides as well as millions of workers and the general public all together are exposed to harmful effects of industrial chemicals. The world’s poorest 3.5 billion people largely rely directly on the environment for their basic services (water, food, shelter etc.). Children are particularly susceptible to the negative health impacts of their environment. It is estimated that a mother can pass as much as 33% of her chemical body burden to her child¹. In addition, due to their rapid growth and development and greater exposure relative to body weight, children are particularly impacted by exposure to chemicals and pollutants.

By joining forces with the Basel Convention on the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, the three conventions together ensure that hazardous chemicals are managed within a life-cycle approach, thereby ensuring that chemicals are managed in the most environmentally sound manner from cradle to grave, and in doing so ensures that ‘that no one is left behind’.

Further information on the Rotterdam Convention

¹ UNDP/GEF (2015) Chemicals and waste management for sustainable development.



*The Rotterdam Convention on the **Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade** was adopted in 1998 and entered into force in 2004. As of April 2016 it has 155 parties and thus its coverage is global. The main objective of the Convention is to promote shared responsibility and cooperative efforts among Parties in the international trade of certain hazardous chemicals in order to protect human health and the environment from potential harm and to contribute to their environmentally sound use.*

Its key provisions include (1) a Prior Informed Consent procedure which provides for a national decision making process on import of hazardous chemicals listed under the Convention and seeks to ensure compliance with these decisions by exporting Parties and (2) exchange of information on a broad range of potentially hazardous chemicals.

The Rotterdam Convention serves as a first line of protection for Parties against the unwanted import of potentially harmful hazardous pesticides and industrial chemicals. The Convention covers 47 pesticides and industrial chemicals that have been banned or severely restricted for health or environmental reasons by Parties and which have been notified by Parties for inclusion in the Prior Informed Consent procedure.

Insecticides, herbicides and fungicides are vital to modern agriculture, protecting food and other crops from excessive damage by pests and diseases, and protecting human and livestock health from vector-borne diseases. However, pesticides can affect a wide variety of non-target organisms, including beneficial soil microorganisms, decreasing ecosystem resilience and reducing soil fertility, thereby undermining food security. Once used, pesticides accumulate in the air or water or on land, where they can harm non-target species and diminish biodiversity. By contaminating groundwater, lakes, rivers and other bodies of water, pesticides pollute drinking supplies, fish and other resources that are vital for human wellbeing. By polluting soil, they can endanger farmers at work and children at play. Although developing countries use only 25% of the world pesticide production, they experience 99% of deaths due to pesticide exposure². Poor people often use severely hazardous pesticide formulations rather than safer alternatives.

Hazardous pesticides have different impact on the life quality of women, men, children and other groups interacting with their health directly and indirectly and with the environment that is surrounding them. Globally in 2013, 3.3 million cases of human poisonings were reported, almost the same as those injured from assaults with firearms (3.6 million)³. On a yearly basis, it is estimated that excessive exposure to and inappropriate use of pesticides contribute to poisoning a minimum of 3 million people, especially impoverished rural workers⁴.

Industrial chemicals are essential to contribute in numerous ways to establish and/or preserve an elevated standard of living in countries at all stages of development. They play an important part in different fields such as healthcare, food production and telecommunications. Under certain conditions, the large scale production and use of certain chemicals may result in the degradation of our environment and adverse impact to human health and wildlife. Furthermore, while most countries have review and regulatory programmes for pesticides, they lack similar programmes for industrial chemicals, resulting in difficulties for these countries to take informed decisions about the import of industrial chemicals.

2. The identification of gaps, areas requiring urgent attention, risks and challenges:

² Jeyaratnam, J. (1990) "Acute pesticide poisoning: a major global health problem" World health statistics quarterly. Volume:43 Issue:3 Pages:139-44. More recent data for some countries can be found at WHO (2008) „Acute pesticide poisoning: a proposed classification tool“ Bulletin of the World Health Organisation, vol 86:3..

³ Global Burden of Disease Study 2013 Collaborators (2015) "Global, regional, and national incidence, prevalence, and years lived with disability for 301 Acute and chronic diseases and injuries in 188 countries, 1990-2013: a systematic analysis for the Global Burden of Disease Study 2013" The Lancet, Vol. 386, No. 9995, p743-800 (<http://www.thelancet.com/global-burden-of-disease>).

⁴ Jeyaratnam, J. (1990).



There are a number of gaps and challenges faced by Parties related with the implementation of the Rotterdam Convention.

Of the hundreds of thousands of chemicals in existence only a very small percentage has been listed under the Rotterdam Convention as hazardous chemicals. The main reason being that decisions for listing under the Rotterdam Convention are adopted by consensus only following a scientific review process. Of concern is the lack of political consensus by the Conference of the Parties of the Rotterdam Convention for a number of chemicals even after clear scientific guidance has been given by the Chemicals Review Committee. This has resulted in a situation, where Parties, in support of listing those chemicals, are prevented from effectively managing trade in those chemicals. Such lack of consensus has therefore also resulted in:

- 1. Limiting support to many developing countries and countries with economies in transition which currently lack national infrastructures and the capacity to assess and manage the risks posed by widely produced and traded hazardous chemicals and to effectively implement the Prior Informed Consent procedure of the Rotterdam Convention. For example, capacities of customs officers is critical to strengthen the capacity of customs to control the trade of chemicals.*
- 2. Increased vulnerability of those countries to the potential risks to hazardous chemicals and pesticides pose to the environment, human health and wildlife.*
- 3. Lack of support to develop risk management strategies to chemicals recommended by the Scientific Review Committee for listing, including a number of other listed chemicals.*
- 4. Insufficient participation of industry in the development and availability of alternatives, although listing does not lead to an effective ban under the Rotterdam Convention.*

*Moreover, there are gaps in the international chemicals and waste regime that require urgent attention: developing countries are not yet sufficiently protected against the risks and threats of heavy metals such as lead and cadmium, endocrine disruptors which pose a challenge for many countries, as well as the risks of new chemicals and technologies are not yet fully understood. Therefore, it is important that institutions like UNEP continue to address these areas and support the effective implementation of the Rotterdam Convention. **Valuable lessons learned on ensuring that no one is left behind:***

There are a number of examples of activities and initiatives aiming to enhance the implementation of the Rotterdam Convention and to ensure that all in developed and developing countries, representing various stakeholder groups are protected from harmful effects of chemicals.

A first example is the enhancement of synergies within the chemicals and waste regime. By enhancing cooperation, synergies and coordination between the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention and by merging the three secretariats into one secretariat supporting all three conventions, the capacity, expertise and resources have been pooled, leading to an overall increase of the effectivity and capacity of the secretariat. As a consequence, support for developing countries has become more comprehensive, coherent and effective. The fact that the conferences of the Parties of the three conventions meet together has on the one side increased the capacity and expertise of developing countries to participate, reduced transaction costs, and facilitated the adoption of coherent guidance across the three convention which facilitates implementation on the ground. Finally, the possibility to learn directly from the other conventions and to directly build on their expertise has also helped that no one is left behind.

Another example is the programme on enhancing effective participation in the work of the Chemical Review Committee (CRC) under the Rotterdam Convention and the Persistent Organic Pollutants Review Committee (POPRC) under the Stockholm Convention⁵. These scientific bodies often work on cross-cutting issues, have similar processes, review the same substances at the different stages of their life-cycle, consult the same

⁵ Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants.



experts, and share members. Thus, the bodies benefit from increased mutual cooperation and information sharing. The programme included the organization of a number of joint workshops in Asia, Latin America, and English- and French-speaking Africa. The workshops enhanced the understanding of Parties and stakeholders of processes for reviewing and listing chemicals in the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions as well as provided opportunities for information exchange and networking among Committee members, experts, Parties and observers. In addition, the workshops served as a forum to discuss and explore a synergized approach for the implementation of the conventions at the national and regional levels.

3. Emerging issues likely to affect the realization of this principle:

The Rotterdam Convention is a living convention as Parties have a possibility to add new chemicals that satisfy specific criteria. There are concerns regarding the repeated failure of the parties to reach agreement on the listing of chemicals whose listing had been recommended by the Chemical Review Committee, the Convention's scientific subsidiary body.

While the Rotterdam Convention does not constitute a ban on the use and/or production of chemicals, several countries and chemical producers consider inclusion under the Rotterdam Convention a "blacklisting" of chemicals and they see their trade volumes decrease. Some Parties are thus reluctant to add new chemicals that are still in trade to the Convention. However, this also prevents countries from receiving vital information on these chemicals and to make informed decisions about their import and export.

Management of hazardous wastes also requires the adequate transfer of technology.. Countries with limited capacity to handle 'expired' and 'stockpiles' of unused pesticides presents a threat to health and the environment. The sound management of those chemicals using appropriate technology will also reduce unintentional release into the environment is also important.

4. Areas where political guidance by the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development is required:

The most important area where guidance by the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development would be required is by stressing the importance of sound management of chemicals and waste and the implementation of the relevant conventions for sustainable development and in achieving the 2030 goals. Indeed, sound chemicals and waste management is not only important from the perspective of environmental protection and human health, it is also an important source of prosperity and economic wellbeing. Therefore, implementation of the conventions is crucial. And it would be important to prioritize this work also in view of provision of support.

Finally, the area in which the political guidance from the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development would be important is to encourage the lead ministries and agencies that are tasked with the coordination of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the national level to integrate chemicals and wastes management issues into plans and strategies on sustainable development, health, agriculture and other sectors.

5. Policy recommendations on ways to accelerate progress for those at risk of being left behind:

There are a number of actions within the mandate of the Rotterdam Convention which will support Parties to the Rotterdam Convention in accelerating progress for those affected by toxic chemicals. In light of enhancing coordination and cooperation of the implementation between the Basel⁶, Rotterdam and

⁶ Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal.



Stockholm Conventions, some of the recommendations address all three conventions and sustainable chemicals and waste management in general:

- 1) To mainstream sustainable chemicals and waste management into national development strategies.*
- 2) To develop and enhance institutional, legal, and regulatory frameworks for the implementation of the Rotterdam but also Basel and Stockholm conventions, including enforcement.*
- 3) To increase efforts of governments and stakeholders towards the coordinated implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and SAICM, including through multi-sectoral and multi-stakeholder coordination mechanisms.*
- 4) To promote integrated approach to chemicals management by mainstreaming chemicals and wastes issues into plans and strategies on sustainable development, health, agriculture and other sectors.*
- 5) To promote the adoption of sound chemicals management corporate policies and practices throughout the value chain, including extended producer responsibility, publically 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.*
- 6) To maximize efforts for the management of hazardous chemicals and wastes through the regional delivery mechanisms including regional centres under Basel and Stockholm Conventions.*
- 7) To provide safe and decent jobs involving chemicals and waste in manufacturing, design, processes and productions, including resources recovery and recycling.*
- 8) To invest into research related to alternatives for the use of highly hazardous pesticides and toxic industrial chemicals and take measures for replacing them with safer alternatives.*
- 9) To develop and adopt integrated pest management (IPM) and integrated vector management (IVM) in national agricultural and public health strategies.*
- 10) To take measures towards reducing frequency and severity of chemicals poisoning from household and other products, such as by labelling and sharing information on chemicals in products.*