

# **2024 session of United Nations High Level Political Forum and Economic and Social Council**

**8-17 and 15-17 July 2024**

## **Input by the President of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade**

### **Introduction**

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 February 2024, it has 165 Parties and thus its coverage is global. The 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. It aims to contribute to the environmentally sound use of those hazardous chemicals by facilitating information exchange about their characteristics, by providing for a national decision-making process on their import and export and by disseminating these decisions to Parties.

***(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 impacts on the implementation of the sustainable development goals in the context of the management of hazardous chemicals and wastes.

Sustainable development Goal 1: No poverty

- The living crisis in many countries around the world heightens the risk of exposure to hazardous chemicals including persistent organic pollutants (POPs), especially for the poorest and most vulnerable populations (SDG 1). Communities grappling with poverty already face heightened vulnerability 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 being exposed to harmful substances and hence deteriorate their resilience capacity.

Sustainable development goal 2: No hunger

- Crises can impact countries' financial and technical capacities to control hazardous chemicals. Indeed, in times of crises, governments often have reduced capacities for the implementation of the Convention, including environmental controls, customs controls, and other enforcement measures. This in turn can lead to less information exchange between countries to make informed decisions when trading in hazardous chemicals, as well as to increased illegal trade in those chemicals. This is a problem from the angle of SDG 2 as many chemicals either from agricultural or industrial sectors are released in the environment and find themselves in the food supply chain leading to health risks and food contamination.<sup>2</sup>

Sustainable Development Goal 13: Climate Action

- Lack of financial or technical capacity can stand in the way of implementing climate action measures, whether in terms of mitigation or adaptation. It is 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>, therefore both problems should not be addressed in a vacuum but in a holistic manner which looks at the impacts of the triple planetary crisis as a whole.

Sustainable Development Goal 16: Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions

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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> [Persistent Organic Pollutants in Food: Contamination Sources, Health Effects and Detection Methods - PMC \(nih.gov\)](#)

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

- Crises, notably armed conflicts, impact peace, justice, and strong institutions. The environmental damage in terms of toxic hazards and pollution caused by wars can persist for many years.

It is also worth noting that illegal trade in hazardous chemicals is a challenge under the Rotterdam Convention where little information is available. Prevention and combatting of illegal trade are challenging tasks requiring effective national legal and institutional frameworks, inter-agency mechanisms, and close collaboration among all stakeholders, Parties, within and between regions. Political will, clear mandates, training, and awareness of the enforcement community are needed in detection, classification, investigation and prosecution of cases of illegal trade. The combination of these factors can be difficult to meet when a country lacks strong legal and institutional frameworks, or is experiencing political unrest and showcase the importance of SDGs 16 and 17.

***(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***

**(1) International cooperation and coordination**

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 (COP) decisions on international cooperation gave a mandate to the Secretariat to enhance cooperation with specific international bodies, such as the Minamata Convention on Mercury, 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 (UNFCCC); 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.

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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.

Scientific evidence of the interlinkages between hazardous 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) Science-policy interface**

The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions are science-based, legally binding global treaties aimed at the protection of human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals and wastes. Policy decisions taken by their governing bodies, the Conferences of the Parties (COPs), are underpinned by various scientific assessments. Science is a core component of each of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions,<sup>6</sup> informing technical experts', policymakers' and other stakeholders' evaluation of problems, formulation of recommendations and policy responses, and supporting implementation by Parties and other stakeholders at the regional and national levels.

The Rotterdam Convention is an example of science-based policy at work. Not only has it been established in response to scientific evidence, but it also considers, and needs continued access to, scientific and other information to support its processes and implementation at all levels.

The Chemical Review Committee under the Rotterdam Convention, which reviews industrial chemicals and pesticides according to the criteria set out by the Convention in Annexes II and IV, aids Parties make decision in line with the best available science.

Initiatives like the road map "from Science to Action" and workshops organised by the Secretariat aim to address these challenges and promote science-based action through capacity building to enhance interaction between scientists, policymakers and other actors for science-based action.

The Secretariat cooperates and coordinates with UNEP and, as appropriate, other relevant organizations, scientific bodies and stakeholders with the aim of strengthening the science-policy interface; and with UNEP in the preparation of the assessment of options for strengthening the science-policy interface at the international level for the sound management of chemicals and waste, as per UNEA resolution 4/8, particularly with regard to possible synergies and opportunities between the existing mechanisms under the Basel, Rotterdam and

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<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/>

<sup>6</sup> For more information see the information brochure and other related document:

<http://www.brsmeas.org/Implementation/FromSciencetoAction/Overview/tabid/4749/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

Stockholm conventions and the science-policy interface for the wider sound management of chemicals and waste.

At its fifth session held in March 2022, the UNEA adopted resolution 5/8 to establish a science-policy panel (SPP) to support action on chemicals, waste and pollution. The resolution requested the UNEP Executive Director to, among others, cooperate closely with the secretariats of relevant Multilateral Environmental Agreements and relevant international organizations and bodies, as appropriate. The BRS Secretariat has been closely involved in the dialogue on establishing the SPP.

Science-policy interface is crucial for the implementation of all SDGs as policymaking based on science and knowledge promotes innovative solutions and effectiveness.

### **(3) PIC Circular**

One of the objectives of the Rotterdam Convention is facilitating information exchange about characteristics of hazardous chemicals by providing for a national decision-making process on their import and export and by disseminating these decisions to Parties. One of the mechanisms to facilitate this objective is the PIC Circular. The PIC Circular is a key document in the implementation of the Rotterdam Convention, both for the operation of the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure and as a mechanism for the exchange of information on hazardous chemicals. It is published in June and December in English, French and Spanish.

The PIC procedure ensures that importing countries receive relevant information about hazardous chemicals and can decide whether to allow imports or not. It empowers countries to make informed decisions regarding international trade of such chemicals, fostering international cooperation by also requiring exporting Parties to ensure exporters respect the decisions of importing Parties. The second function of the PIC Circular provides Parties with essential data as set out in the Convention. The latest 58th edition of the Rotterdam Convention PIC Circular was made available in December 2023<sup>7</sup>

#### ***(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***

Developing legal frameworks is a core requirement under the Rotterdam 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 trade in hazardous chemicals, but also contributes to the achievement of SDG 16 beyond the issue of international trade of hazardous chemicals. The Compliance Committee of the Rotterdam Convention, in addition to considering specific submissions, also examines systemic issues of general compliance of interest to all Parties.

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<sup>7</sup> [PIC Circular](#).

These include the issue of laws, regulations, policies, regulations and other measures to implement the Convention, which was included in the programme of work for the Committee. For example decision RC-11/5 of the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties noted that the number of Parties transmitting texts of national legislation or other measures that they have adopted to implement and enforce the Convention to the Secretariat may be indicative of a systemic issue of general compliance with the various obligations under the Convention to adopt and implement appropriate legislative or administrative measures.

### ***(2) Effective implementation of the Rotterdam Convention***

Among the key challenges identified by Parties during the technical assistance needs assessment are the lack of availability of data and information, inadequate legal and institutional frameworks, scarce financial resources and technical 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.

Technical assistance for the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention is essential, including developing and strengthening national legislative and regulatory frameworks and sub-regional approaches consistent with the requirements of the Rotterdam Convention; compliance with export notification requirements for chemicals banned or severely restricted at national level; risk evaluation and reduction methodologies for hazardous chemicals and pesticides, monitoring and surveillance so as to take decisions on final regulatory action and preparation of notifications; submission of import responses; promotion of sustainable alternatives to hazardous pesticides in situ, i.e. biological pesticides and integrated pests management using the Farmer Field Schools methodology for training purposes; Integrated approach on pesticide management both for the work on identification of Severely Hazardous Pesticide Formulations (SHPFs) and on Highly Hazardous Pesticides (HHPs) on the national level. Capacity building efforts are needed to support Parties with these activities. In the last technical assistance needs assessment, the needs and priority areas most often mentioned by the 60 responding Parties were monitoring and surveillance of national exposure situations to support possible decisions on banning or severely restricting chemicals; supporting custom officers in implementing the Convention; monitoring and reporting pesticide poisoning incidents related to SHPFs; and ensuring provision of information required by the Convention (risk data, labelling etc.).

### ***(3) Accelerate action and listing recommended by the Chemical Review Committee under the Rotterdam Convention***

More support is needed to support and facilitate Parties' decision-making based on recommendations by the Chemical Review Committee. Science-based decision making and agreement by the Parties would not only strengthen the Rotterdam Convention and its bodies but also effectively deliver sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions in relation to international trade in hazardous chemicals as a whole.<sup>8</sup>

### ***(4) Increased availability of alternatives, although listing does not lead to an effective ban under the Rotterdam Convention.***

Increased participation by and awareness by all stakeholders, including private sector representatives, in the Rotterdam Convention procedures could contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals through actions to implement the Rotterdam Convention:

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<sup>8</sup> Meeting report available at [COP.11 \(pic.int\)](https://www.pic.int).

- By promoting the informed decision making in the international trade of hazardous chemicals and the development of more sustainable alternatives, private sector collaboration in light of the production at local level of pesticides could create economic opportunities and stimulate growth and employment opportunities, which would aid alleviating poverty.
- Private sector involvement could help promote sustainable agricultural pests management practices without harmful pesticides a. These alternatives would enhance food security, contributing to SDG 2.
- Private sector engagement could promote further partnerships opportunities between governments, businesses, and civil society organizations to address environmental and public health challenges associated with hazardous chemicals, which would also contribute to building efficient, accountable, and holistic governance, as outlined in SDG 16.

As such, increasing the participation of the private sector in the context of the Rotterdam Convention can help catalyse productive capacity development and structural transformation, which is required to achieve sustainable development, including those under review.<sup>9</sup>

***(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 Rotterdam Convention which will support Parties in accelerating progress for those affected by hazardous and other wastes, with a focus on SDGs 1, 2, 13, 16 and 17.

The eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) took place from 1 to 12 May 2023. During that meeting, important steps towards building further resilience and contributions to achieving the SDGs were taken, in particular 15 decisions were adopted, among which, eight are joint to two or three of the conventions, for instance on enhanced cooperation with other bodies, technical assistance, preventing and combating illegal traffic and trade and the clearing-house mechanism.

- (1) One of the main outcomes of the Rotterdam Convention Conference is the **listing of the pesticide terbufos**, for which an extremely high hazard to terrestrial organisms has been identified. This listing makes the pesticide subject to the Prior Informed Consent procedure, thereby granting Parties to the Convention the right to decide on its future import and ensuring a corresponding obligation on exporting Parties to ensure exporters respect such decisions. The listing of this extremely hazardous pesticide under the Rotterdam Convention is consistent with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals under the 2030 Agenda, in particular Goal 1 ( End poverty in all its forms everywhere), Goal 2 (end hunger; achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture), Goal 3 (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being

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<sup>9</sup> [Policy Brief: Implementing supportive policies to build a vibrant private sector as a driver of structural transformation \(unctad.org\)](https://unctad.org/publication-policy-brief/Implementing-supportive-policies-to-build-a-vibrant-private-sector-as-a-driver-of-structural-transformation)

at all ages), Goal 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns) and Goal 15 (protect, restore, and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss).

- (2) The Conference of the Parties also adopted the programme of work of the **Compliance Committee for 2024-2025** and mandated the Committee to examine a number of systemic issues of general compliance of interest to all Parties. The Committee was also instructed to continue to accord priority to dealing with specific submissions regarding Party compliance. This is an important step in providing a further tool to support Parties' efforts to promote shared responsibility and cooperative efforts, in accordance with their obligations under the Convention, providing more access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels as set out in Goal 16, as well as enhancing collaboration and partnership as per Goal 17.

***(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>10</sup> within the mandate of the Stockholm 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 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.
- 2) To provide safe and decent jobs involving hazardous chemicals and waste in manufacturing, design, processes and productions, including resources recovery and recycling.
- 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 provide priority attention to developing, enforcing and/or strengthening national legislation and/or regulations implementing the Convention.
- 5) To recognize the importance of multilateral environmental agreements on hazardous chemicals and wastes, including the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm

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<sup>10</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>



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.

- 6) 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.
- 7) 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 hazardous 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.
- 8) To promote knowledge building and information sharing on hazardous chemicals and wastes for better management and risk reduction throughout their lifecycle.
- 9) 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.
- 10) To emphasize the importance of the involvement of the chemical industry in contributing to initiatives on minimizing the risks of exposure of vulnerable populations in developing countries and countries with economies in transition to adverse effects of hazardous chemicals.