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 Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants

Introduction

The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) was adopted on 22 May 2001 and entered into force in 2004. As of February 2024, it has 186 Parties and thus its coverage is global. The overarching objective of the Stockholm Convention is to protect human health and the environment from persistent organic pollutants (POPs). These are chemicals that remain intact in the environment for long periods, become widely distributed geographically, accumulate in the fatty tissue of humans and wildlife, and have harmful impacts on human health and on the environment.

(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, financial shocks, and armed conflicts around the globe, have had impacts on the implementation of the sustainable development goals (SDGs) in the context of the management of hazardous and other waste.

Sustainable development Goal 1: No poverty

- The living crisis in many countries around the world heightens the risk of exposure to hazardous chemicals and wastes and POPs, 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 chemicals and wastes due to their socio-economic circumstances. Indeed, urban areas often concentrate impoverished populations near landfills, hazardous waste disposal sites, incinerators, and industrial zones.[1] Living crises amplify the risk of an increase in impoverished populations living in the vicinity of toxic waste and being exposed to harmful chemicals.

Sustainable development goal 2: No hunger

- Crises can impact countries' financial and technical capacities to eliminate or restrict POPs. Indeed, in times of crises, governments often have reduced capacities to implement the Convention, including environmental controls, customs controls, and other enforcement measures. In turn, this can lead to more releases, both intentional and unintentional, of POPs in contravention of the Convention. This is a problem from the angle of SDG 2, ending hunger, as many pollutants from agricultural or industrial sectors are released into the environment and find themselves in the food supply, leading to health risks and food contamination.[2] This is of particular concern for POPs, which bioaccumulate and therefore are found at higher concentrations at higher levels in the food chain.

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. Armed conflicts are also a threat to climate change as more than 5% of global emissions are linked to conflict or militaries.[3] 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. [4] Therefore, both problems should not be addressed in a vacuum but in a holistic manner which looks at the impacts of the triple planetary crises as a whole.

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

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

[3] The climate costs of war and militaries can no longer be ignored | Doug Weir | The Guardian

[4] New study confirms relationship between toxic pollution, climate risks to human health | ScienceDaily

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

- Crises, notably armed conflicts, impact peace, justice, and strong institutions. The environmental damage, notably in terms of toxic hazards and pollution caused by wars and lack of peace can persist for many years. Implementation of the Stockholm Convention can contribute to establishing strong legal and institutional frameworks and mechanisms that benefit countries beyond the immediate issue of implementation of the Convention only.

(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) Effectiveness evaluation of the Stockholm Convention

According to Article 16 of the Stockholm Convention, the effectiveness of the Convention shall be evaluated on the basis of available scientific, environmental, technical and economic information, including reports and other monitoring information on the presence and levels of POPs and their regional and global environmental transport; national reports submitted pursuant to Article 15; and non-compliance information provided pursuant to Article 17. Outcomes of the second effectiveness evaluation of the Stockholm Convention covering the period between 2017 and 2023 were presented to the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention in 2023.

It was concluded that the Convention provides an effective and dynamic framework to regulate POPs throughout their lifecycle, addressing the production, use, import, export, releases and disposal of these chemicals worldwide. The report of the second effectiveness evaluation notes progress that has occurred since the first evaluation but highlights that there continues to be ongoing issues that hinder the full implementation of the Convention. The report further notes that mechanisms and processes required by the Convention to support Parties in meeting their obligations have all been put in place, with the exception of procedures and mechanisms on compliance. These procedures and mechanisms on compliance were since adopted by the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties. As for the first evaluation, a major challenge to the evaluation continues to be the limited data available from national reports and national implementation plans (NIPs), and recommendations have been made to address those and other implementation issues. Monitoring results indicate that regulations targeting POPs have succeeded in reducing levels of POPs in humans and the environment. For the initial POPs, concentrations measured in air and in human populations have declined and continue to decline or remain at low levels due to restrictions on POPs, some of which predated the Stockholm Convention and are now incorporated in it. For the newly listed POPs, concentrations are beginning to show decreases, although in a few instances, increasing and/or stable levels are observed. The priority areas for action to address

implementation challenges identified in the second effectiveness evaluation include the following:

- Strengthening legal, administrative and other measures to control POPs;
- Addressing compliance, by establishing compliance procedures and mechanisms;
- Strengthening information collection;
- Strengthening environmentally sound management of POPs waste;
- Strengthening awareness-raising and information exchange;
- Strengthening the provision of technical assistance;
- Strengthening the provision of financial assistance;
- Improving effectiveness evaluation.

This progress is also in line with reaching the SDGs, including those under review, as reducing the impacts of toxic pollution through collaboration is essential in addressing poverty (Goal 1), food security (SDG 2), and is integral to upholding peace and justice goals (Goal 16).

(2) 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 decisions on international cooperation gave a mandate to the Secretariat to enhance cooperation with specific international bodies, such as he 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. [5]

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.

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.

[5] UNEP/CHW.16/INF/37–UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.11/INF/20–UNEP/POPS/COP.11/INF/41.

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[6].

(3) 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, are underpinned by various scientific assessments. Science is a core component of each of the Conventions,[7] 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 Stockholm 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 POPs Review Committee under the Stockholm Convention, which reviews substances at different stages of their life cycle, 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 hazardous 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 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 hazardous 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.

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[6] 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/

[7] 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

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

(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) In terms of key areas where support is most urgently needed, Parties still need support with meeting the obligations of the Stockholm Convention through **technical assistance**. At the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties developing countries Parties stressed that each additional chemical brings new challenges and obligations at the national level on how to handle wastes in an environmentally sound manner.[8] Thus, assistance and capacity building is needed, including for development of or strengthening legislation, identification, collection and sharing of information on POPs, in particular those still in use and those newly listed and to make informed decisions on newly listed POPs; technical guidance related to the elimination of POPs including phasing out of POPs (e.g. guidance on alternatives), sound management of POPs in waste streams, and application of the Toolkit is widely disseminated, tested and practically applied by Parties; application of best available techniques and best environmental practices; regional monitoring activities to process and evaluate monitoring data; phasing in safer and affordable alternatives for selected POPs; and availability of data on stockpiles and contaminated sites for specific POPs, e.g. DDT, PCBs.

(2) It is urgent to accelerate action to meet the deadlines related to the **elimination of the use of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) in equipment by 2025 and the environmentally sound waste management of liquids containing PCB and equipment contaminated with PCB by 2028**. PCB is one of the original twelve POPs covered by the Stockholm Convention. They possess properties including longevity, heat absorbance and form an oily liquid at room temperature that is useful for electrical utilities and in other industrial applications**.** Due to their physico-chemical properties, PCB were manufactured worldwide for use in a wide range of applications, most importantly as insulating fluids in electric equipment such as transformers. PCBs were also used in other types of closed and semi-closed applications, such as capacitors, as well as in so-called 'open applications, such as paints, sealants and carbon paper. PCBs can cause serious health effects in humans and animals, including reproductive impairment and immune system dysfunctions. The International Agency for Research on Cancer classified PCBs as Group 1 "carcinogenic to humans". PCB have been detected in human milk, and in some cases, observed levels for indicator PCB were several orders of magnitude higher than the WHO safety level. Once in the environment, PCB enter the food chain and more than 90% of human exposure to PCB is through food. The production and new uses of PCB are banned, and Parties to the Stockholm Convention must eliminate the use of PCB in equipment by 2025 and to ensure the environmentally sound waste management of liquids containing PCB and equipment contaminated with PCB by 2028. Progress in PCB elimination has been

[8] enb15304e.pdf (iisd.org)

achieved in all regions, nevertheless PCB existences still remain in use and in storage, and Parties and other stakeholders are to take urgent measures in order the meet the 2025 and 2028 deadlines.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF), as the financial mechanism for the Stockholm Convention, has financed more than 80 projects in more than 120 Parties to eliminate the use and safely dispose of PCB. Parties have reported more than 600,000 tons of PCB eliminated through local solutions or exported abroad for disposal. A global assessment of the progress was reported to COP-11 and further assessments of the capacities of all regions and a validation exercise of remaining PCB existences is being undertaken. The BRS Secretariat will continue supporting Parties in their efforts to meet the 2025 and 2028 deadlines established under the Convention.

(3) **Financial assistance and bridging the gap** is another important need to help parties implement their increasing obligations under the Stockholm Convention.

Article 13 of the Stockholm Convention states that each Party undertakes to provide, within its capabilities, financial support and incentives in respect of those national activities that are intended to achieve the objective of this Convention in accordance with its national plans, priorities and programmes. Paragraph 6 of Article 13 defines a mechanism for the provision of adequate and sustainable financial resources to developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition on a grant or concessional basis to assist in their implementation of the Convention.

Funding gap was an issue discussed at the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties in 2023. For example, it was found that, with average disposal costs of USD 3,316/ton, the projected funding gap for PCB disposal amounts to about USD 1.7 billion.[9]

The Parties in the above-mentioned meeting adopted the terms of reference for the assessment of the funding needed by developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition for the implementation of the Stockholm Convention over the period 2026−2030 and invited Parties and others the relevant information required to undertake the assessment of funding needs.

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.

[9] enb15304e.pdf (iisd.org)

There are several follow-up actions and measures within the mandate of the Stockholm 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.

The eleventh Conference of the Parties took place between 1 and 12 May 2023 and the theme of the meeting was " Accelerating action: Targets for the sound management of chemicals and waste ". During its elevenths meeting important steps towards building further resilience and contributions to achieving the SDGs were taken, in particular, 27 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 in line with the partnership goals under SDG 17.

(1) Within these decisions some significant developments and follow-up measures included **the listing of three chemicals** recommended by its scientific body, the POPs Review Committee, for elimination of all production and use (with specific exemptions) under Annex A, namely UV-328, Dechlorane Plus and the pesticide methoxychlor.

More specifically, UV-328 poses bioaccumulation risks which occur primarily after uptake of UV-328 by organisms through their diet. In humans exposed to this POP through ingestion of contaminated dust or consumption of contaminated food, it can create important health concerns, primarily for the liver and kidneys. [10] There is evidence of bioaccumulation of UV-328 in fish, crustaceans, marine mammals and algae[11], posing risks to human health (SDG 3), access to food security (SDG 2), life below waster (SDG 14) and life on land (SDG 15).

Meanwhile, Dechlorane Plus has been observed as demonstrating toxic effects in different organisms in mammals including liver impairment and endocrine effects.[12] Research has also shown that chicken that were bred in the vicinity of an e-waste facility were naturally exposed to DP through sand and food.[13] This is a concern for human health, especially communities grappling with poverty, as urban areas often concentrate impoverished populations near landfills, hazardous waste disposal sites, incinerators, and industrial zones.

Finally in addition to being bioaccumulative, methoxychlor is very highly toxic to aquatic invertebrates and fish and poses threats to human health and livelihoods.

Thus, elimination of methoxychlor, Dechlorane Plus and UV-328 is consistent with the SDGs under the 2030 Agenda, in particular Goal 1 (no poverty), Goal 2 (end hunger; achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture), Goal 3 (ensure healthy lives and promote well-being at all ages), Goal 12 (responsible consumption and production) and Goal 15 (protect, restore, and promote sustainable

[10] c0604545-a115-9c61-a2ec-fefa5bdc5880 (europa.eu)
[11] c0604545-a115-9c61-a2ec-fefa5bdc5880 (europa.eu)
[12] Toxic effects of dechlorane plus on the common carp (Cyprinus carpio) embryonic development - PubMed (nih.gov)
[13] Microsoft Word - Dechlorane Plus draft risk profile 17 Feb 2020.docx (europa.eu)

use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss).[14]

This brings the list of POPs under the control of the Convention to 34, showcasing the effectiveness of the Convention at listing chemicals as we as identifying, controlling and supporting Parties to eliminate hazardous chemicals. Cooperation by the parties in following recommendations from its scientific body and their willingness to collaborate to strengthen the control over POPs are examples under Goal 17.

(2) **Adoption of compliance procedures under the Stockholm Convention**. By Decision SC-11/19 the eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties adopted the compliance procedures and institutional mechanisms under Article 17 of the Stockholm Convention. With this, the Conference of the Parties have put in place all the mechanisms envisioned by the Stockholm Convention, as a non-confrontational, transparent, cost-effective and preventive mechanism which will help Parties to comply with their obligations under the convention and enhance 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[15] 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) 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.

3) To provide priority attention to developing, enforcing and/or strengthening national legislation and/or regulations implementing the Convention.

4) 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.

[14] Risk Management Evaluation Methoxychlor (europa.eu)

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

5) To 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.

6) 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.

7) To promote knowledge building and information sharing on hazardous chemicals and wastes for better management and risk reduction throughout their lifecycle.

8) 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.

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