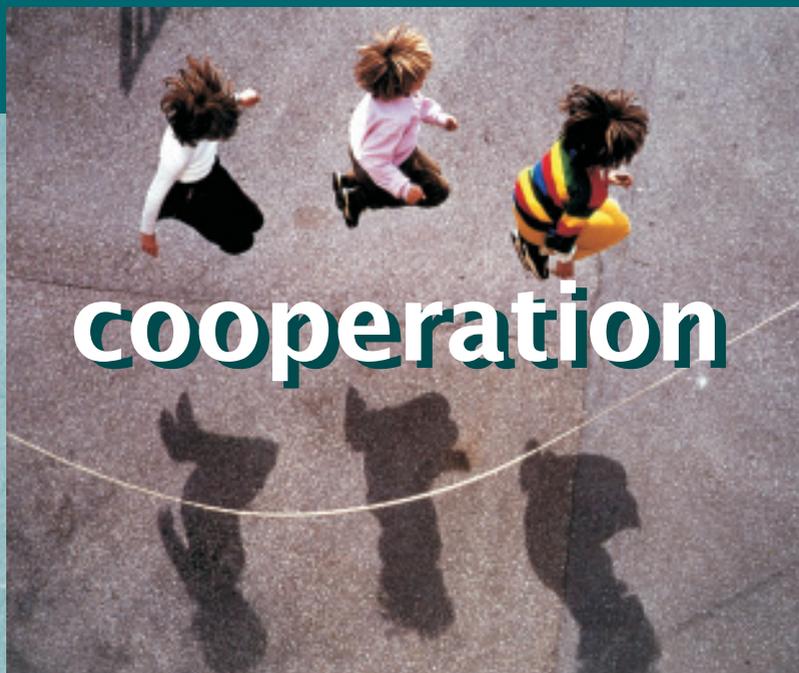




A guide to



**on the Basel, Rotterdam
and Stockholm
Conventions**

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A guide to

cooperation



**on the Basel, Rotterdam and
Stockholm Conventions**

The hazardous chemicals and wastes conventions

The 1989 **Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal** seeks to protect human health and the environment from the adverse effects of hazardous and other wastes. Its member states commit themselves to minimizing the generation of wastes, treating and disposing of wastes as closely as possible to where they were generated, and minimizing exports and imports of wastes. The Convention sets up an international control regime for 45 general categories of wastes and two broad waste streams that together cover hundreds of specific wastes. It also helps governments to build capacity for ensuring the environmentally sound management of hazardous and other wastes.



The 1998 **Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade** promotes cooperation between exporting and importing countries on managing hazardous chemicals. The key to the Convention is Prior Informed Consent (PIC), a procedure aimed especially at helping developing countries, many of which can find it difficult to monitor and control imports. If a member country decides not to accept imports of a

particular chemical or pesticide covered by the treaty, other countries agree not to export this product to that country. Five industrial chemicals and 22 pesticides were included in the Convention's initial PIC list; many more are likely to be added in the coming years.

The 2000 **Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)** targets 12 major POPs for reduction and eventual elimination. This initial list includes PCBs, dioxins and furans, and DDT and other pesticides. The Convention also sets up a system for tackling additional chemicals that may be identified in the future as unacceptably hazardous. It recognizes that a special effort may sometimes be needed to phase out certain chemicals for certain uses and seeks to ensure that this effort is made. It also channels resources into cleaning up the existing stockpiles and dumps of POPs that litter the world's landscape.

F oreword

The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions are designed to protect human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals and wastes. Although legally separate, each governed by its respective Conference of the Parties, the three conventions all address the same fundamental challenge: the most toxic chemical products of our industrial civilization must be carefully managed during their entire life-cycle, from production to disposal; where possible, they must be minimized or replaced with safer alternatives.

Recognizing the importance of coordination amongst these conventions, governments have urged the three secretariats to work together on capacity-building and other support activities. They have also called for greater collaboration on chemicals and wastes issues within and amongst governments. In this spirit, UNEP's Governing Council decided in 2002 to advance the development of a Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). The SAICM initiative was endorsed by the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in September 2002 and is now well under way.

With this broad consensus in mind, UNEP – which provides the secretariats for the Basel and Stockholm Conventions and, jointly with the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, for the Rotterdam Convention – is committed to promoting synergies amongst the three conventions at every level: globally, regionally and nationally.

This short booklet briefly outlines various concrete and practical ways of achieving the desired synergies. It is based on a series of regional and sub-regional workshops organized by UNEP for convention focal points. I would like to thank the Government of Switzerland for its generous support to these workshops. I am also grateful to the three secretariats, which together will play an essential role in promoting the coordinated national implementation of the chemicals and wastes conventions in the years to come.

Klaus Töpfer
Executive Director
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Introduction

The importance of exploiting synergies is widely recognized. When two or more organizations or processes deal with similar or overlapping concerns, it is clearly to their mutual advantage to join forces. The result can be much greater than the sum of their individual efforts.

In 2002 – 2004, UNEP organized a series of regional and sub-regional workshops to discuss how to improve synergies amongst the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, particularly at the national level. The workshops were held in Latin America and the Caribbean (Montevideo); Eastern and Central Europe and the Caucasus (Riga); western Africa (Cotonou); southern and eastern Africa (Pretoria); and the Middle East and northern Africa (Damascus).

The convention focal points who participated in the five regional workshops agreed that many of the tools, skills and human resources required for each of the three conventions are essentially the same. So too are the obstacles the conventions face and the strategies needed to overcome them. Fortunately, there are many opportunities for working together. Collaborating at the national level is vital for reducing costs, boosting effectiveness and eliminating the risk of gaps or double-work.

What follows is a synthesis of the discussions and the proposals agreed at these workshops. It consists of eight simple checklists of common-sense measures that the convention focal points and their colleagues can consider when reviewing their efforts to strengthen collaboration. More details on the presentations and reports of the five workshops can also be viewed at www.environmenthouse.ch.

1 Establish goals and principles for promoting synergies

The integrated national implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions offers a range of benefits. By explicitly acknowledging these benefits, focal points and other stakeholders can set the stage for stronger collaboration. They can build a framework for identifying and promoting synergies by pursuing these goals:

- ✓ Make a firm and clear commitment to coordinating the implementation of the chemicals and wastes conventions.
- ✓ Seek out cost efficiencies by reducing overlap and duplication and avoiding potential contradictions.
- ✓ Bring stakeholders affected by or responsible for managing chemicals and wastes together and assign a lead agency the responsibility for promoting this collaboration.

- ✓ Coordinate the development and implementation of chemicals and wastes policies at all levels – globally, regionally and nationally.
- ✓ Agree on a national framework for the life-cycle management of hazardous chemicals and wastes, from production and use to trade and disposal.
- ✓ Strengthen the link between chemicals and wastes management and the broader objectives of sustainable development and poverty reduction, including the goal agreed at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development of using and producing chemicals and managing hazardous wastes in ways that minimize significant adverse effects on human health and the environment by the year 2020.

2

Improve communications and information flows

There is a widespread need for greater awareness and understanding of the provisions of the conventions and of the benefits of joint activities at both the national and regional levels. This need is recognized by the three conventions, all of which include articles promoting information exchange and awareness-raising. Communications can be improved if efforts are made to:

- ✓ Create an active network of focal points, policymakers and stakeholders to facilitate communication both nationally and within the region or sub-region.
- ✓ Share success stories and best practices amongst experts, convention focal points, countries, regions and convention secretariats.
- ✓ Harmonize the national reporting and information systems for the three conventions so that they are, to the extent possible, mutually consistent.
- ✓ Exchange information, expertise and experiences through sub-regional websites, newsletters, email exchanges, videos and conferences.
- ✓ Promote information-exchange networks among national institutions that are active on chemicals and wastes issues.
- ✓ Use the Chemicals Information Exchange Network (CIEN) project and other Internet-based sources of information that are accessible to all partners.



The Chemicals Information Exchange Network project

The Chemicals Information Exchange Network (CIEN) project catalyzes the exchange of chemicals management information nationally, regionally and globally in order to promote the safe use, transport and disposal of chemical substances. Participants in the project learn to use information technology to share data and build partnerships. They also encourage coordination and the integration of the various activities for the sound management of chemicals.

The first phase of the project was launched in Africa (2000) and in Central America and Mexico (2002). Its success was attributed to its practical approach, beginning with stakeholder discussions followed by training workshops and the provision of computers and internet access for each country.

The CIEN Project is a cooperative effort of UNEP and the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), in partnership with the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and with the support of several other partners and donors.

See www.epa.gov/cien/

3 Build greater technical and institutional capacity

The lack of technical capacity, knowledge and skills can be a crucial barrier to implementing the conventions. As a result, each of the three conventions emphasizes the need for capacity building.

The Basel Convention secretariat has established Regional Centres, organized training workshops and seminars, developed methodological tools for environmentally sound management and published numerous legal, technical and scientific guidelines and training manuals.

Since 1998, the secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention has convened a series of regional awareness-raising workshops. It has also organized training workshops aimed at giving governments the tools they need to implement the Convention and promote the sound management of chemicals.

The Stockholm Convention secretariat is helping developing countries to strengthen their national chemicals management programmes through a series of regional workshops organized by UNEP and the Global Environment Facility.

Building greater capacity will mostly involve focusing on "more of what we are already doing" rather than adopting radical new approaches:

- ✓ Develop and strengthen education and training programmes, taking advantage of the Basel and Stockholm Conventions' existing and proposed regional centres.
- ✓ Ensure that international capacity-building projects generate appropriate training materials and help to strengthen global and regional networks of experts.
- ✓ Promote exchange programmes and study tours to share experiences and broaden technical capabilities. Such activities should be conceived cooperatively by officials from the three conventions and should target focal points, stakeholder institutions and customs and enforcement personnel.

4 Strengthen and coordinate the national policy-making process

The coordinated national implementation of the chemicals and wastes conventions is only possible if an effective policy-making structure is in place. For example, many governments with more than one authority for chemicals and wastes-related issues suffer from a lack of inter-ministerial cooperation. Misplaced priorities, political instability and poor information exchange can also hobble policy-making. Possible solutions for improving policy coordination include:

- ✓ Centralize authority for chemicals and wastes management. In many countries such authority is highly fragmented. If a single national authority is responsible for all three conventions, it can more effectively draft legislation to address them comprehensively and avoid overlaps, gaps and contradictions.
- ✓ If centralization is not possible, facilitate cooperation and communication amongst the relevant ministries, authorities and focal points. Strengthen the links and contacts between the authorities responsible for implementing each convention and those responsible for developing the corresponding legislation and regulations.
- ✓ Encourage policy linkages at all levels – local, national, regional and global.
- ✓ Assign the role of focal point to institutions rather than to individuals to reduce instability caused by staff turnover.
- ✓ Ensure that individuals assigned to manage the role of focal point are personally competent, motivated and committed to collaboration.
- ✓ Address practical constraints such as the lack of equipment, laboratories, computers and other infrastructure.

5

Harmonize national laws and policies

In some countries, the lack of coherent and consistent policies, laws and regulations can be a major barrier to managing hazardous chemicals and wastes. Unharmonized rules can create inefficiencies and duplications. The situation can be further complicated when a country has multiple national languages, or when the development of legislation is held up in the bureaucracy.

Some possible solutions at the national level:

- ✓ Take into account the complementarities of the three conventions when developing national legislation on chemicals and wastes management.
- ✓ After ratifying a convention, develop legislation quickly to meet the new obligations, keeping in view any existing laws developed for conventions already in force.
- ✓ Consider integrating the regulations for responding to the provisions of the three conventions into a single national law.
- ✓ If a single national law is not possible, ensure that the laws are not fragmented in a way that makes them difficult to apply.

6

Channel more funding into chemicals and wastes management

Financing is one area where synergies can bring immediate and practical benefits, particularly at the national level. Minimizing duplicative efforts can reduce costs for both governments and companies. It can conserve human resources and produce a more efficient chemicals and wastes management system. Moreover, joint national programming is likely to get more attention from international and bilateral donors.

Some practical recommendations:

- ✓ Identify one or two priorities for financing which involve a basic requirement for all the conventions, such as the technical capacity to identify chemicals.
- ✓ Explore opportunities for synergies between the conventions' respective sources of funding, including the Basel Technical Cooperation Trust Fund and the Global Environment Facility (the GEF is the Stockholm Convention's interim financial mechanism).
- ✓ Use the GEF-funded "enabling activities" for the Stockholm Convention's National Implementation Plans to generate co-benefits for all the conventions.

- ✓ Promote co-financing by national governments, public-sector donors and the private sector.
- ✓ Encourage public-private partnerships on chemicals safety and hazardous wastes management.
- ✓ Consider establishing chemicals safety and wastes management as a higher priority when requesting international development assistance.



7

Build more political and public support

The absence of a strong government commitment to addressing chemicals and wastes will slow down progress on protecting human health and the environment. The situation is even more difficult when focal points are in a weak political position and lack authority or sufficient training and resources. Weak stakeholder involvement is another serious impediment to effective action.

To promote political will and public awareness, focal points can:

- ✓ Make a special effort to sensitize stakeholder institutions and senior policymakers and managers to the fact that the three conventions are complementary and should be implemented in a synergistic manner.
- ✓ Broaden the involvement of stakeholders – including officials at all levels of government – as much as possible.
- ✓ Establish national multi-stakeholder committees on chemicals and wastes.
- ✓ Engage local authorities when relevant project proposals are discussed.
- ✓ Enlist the help of stakeholders in raising greater public awareness.
- ✓ Link chemicals and wastes management to economic development, poverty reduction and other issues of concern to the public.
- ✓ Reach out to the public through the mass media.
- ✓ Create discussion forums to raise public awareness.

8

Strengthen international cooperation

The international community is promoting synergies and collaboration on chemicals and wastes through the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM). Many of the suggestions below for improving international cooperation could be best pursued through the SAICM framework:

- ✓ Make greater use of regional mechanisms to adapt or develop materials, organize regional training and other joint activities and serve as a depository for information on lessons learned. Possible institutions include the Basel Convention Regional Centres, the Regional Centres planned under the Stockholm Convention, regional economic integration organizations, the FAO regional network and UNEP regional offices.
- ✓ Ensure that the national strategy for an integrated approach to national chemicals and wastes management addresses international cooperation as well.



- ✓ Define goals and activities for meeting the WSSD target of achieving the sound management of chemicals and wastes by the year 2020. This will facilitate step-by-step improvements and help to identify and target existing gaps.
- ✓ Consider the various activities of the conventions and their secretariats – including capacity-building programmes, technical assistance, technology transfer and awareness-raising – as common resources for all chemicals and wastes issues.
- ✓ Use the Stockholm Convention’s National Implementation Plans (NIPs) as tools for bringing together everyone concerned with chemicals and wastes management.
- ✓ Consider promoting co-benefits through the regional technical assistance strategy being developed under the Rotterdam Convention.
- ✓ Organize workshops to promote collaboration at the national, sub-regional and regional levels.
- ✓ Promote consistent decisions by the three COPs by coordinating amongst the delegations to ensure a unified national voice.
- ✓ Support and use the Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS).

C onclusion

Hazardous chemicals and wastes will be with us for many decades to come. Governments need to learn from the mistakes of the past and strengthen their ability to protect people and the environment from future harm. While each of the three main global conventions on hazardous chemicals and wastes can contribute to this effort in its own particular way, the three conventions also need to be seen as part of a single integrated strategy.

There are many potential ways in which the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions can be made more mutually supportive. Exploiting the synergies between them will make implementing the conventions more efficient and help national focal points in their day-to-day efforts to safely manage hazardous chemicals and wastes. The result will be great savings of time, money and effort, less duplication and stronger protection for human health and the environment.

It is not easy for under-funded and overworked people charged with implementing conventions to reach across borders and bureaucracies to their unseen colleagues and counterparts. They often need support and additional resources to do so. But only by pulling in the same direction and working together as a national team can governments effectively tackle the growing challenges of hazardous chemicals and wastes.



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