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

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**Rotterdam Convention on the Prior
Informed Consent Procedure for
Certain Hazardous Chemicals and
Pesticides in International Trade**



**Stockholm Convention on
Persistent Organic Pollutants**

**Ad hoc joint working group on enhancing cooperation and
coordination among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions**

Second meeting

Vienna, 10–13 December 2007

Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

**Consideration of the intersessional work undertaken by the
members of the ad hoc joint working group and by the
Secretariats of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention**

**Pooling information on health and environmental impacts/clearing
house mechanisms**

Note by the secretariats

Attached is the thought starter on “Pooling information on health and environmental impacts/clearing house mechanisms” prepared by France and Austria for consideration by the meeting. The document has not been formally edited.

* UNEP/FAO/CHW/RC/POPS/JWG.2/1.

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Pooling information on health and environmental impacts/clearing house mechanisms

Lead: France, Austria.

The document has also received comments from Germany and Denmark

21 November 2007

1. Definition and scope

This question raises the point of better possibilities for circulating information concerning the impacts on health and the environment generated by transboundary movements of wastes and their disposal, by chemicals or by the substances related to PIC or POP.

In addition, and looking at a broader scope, this could also contribute to facilitating national coordination and preparation for respective meetings under the three Conventions.

2. Obligations under the three conventions

Basel Convention

The protection of health and the environment is the first objective of the Basel convention. The preamble of the text mentions this objective several times¹ The provisions of the Basel convention also mention specifically health and the environment, stressing the need to address the exchange of information related to the risks arising from transboundary movements of hazardous wastes, and their potential consequences on human health and the environment:

- Obligation of Parties to co-operate in monitoring the effects of the management of hazardous wastes on human health and the environment (article 10.2.b);
- Obligation of Parties, in case of accidents occurring during the transboundary movement and disposal of hazardous wastes and other wastes, which are likely to present risks to human health and the environment in other States, to inform other States (Article 13.1)
- As part of the annual reporting, Parties are to report on available qualified statistics which have been compiled by them on the effects on human health and the environment of the generation, transportation and disposal of hazardous wastes or other wastes (article 13.3.d).

Stockholm Convention

The protection of health and the environment is a major concern of the Stockholm Convention, as mentioned in its Preamble² as well as in article 1³. This principle is also developed in several other articles of the convention: article 9, concerning the commitments of the Parties regarding the exchange of information article 12 regarding technical assistance and regional centers facilitating exchanges between the Parties

Rotterdam Convention

Under the Rotterdam Convention, the Chemical Review Committee is trying to set up linkages between the different existing risk assessments.

3. Existing data that could be taken into account

In the first place, it could be very useful to take into account the work done within the existing databases and clearinghouse mechanisms. A good reference can be provided for instance by the work of the Rotterdam Convention' the Chemical Review Committee. Such a work is an attempt to fill the existing gaps and setting connections between the different risks assessment studies, in order to take profit from the works achieved in the frame of other conventions (Stockholm, Montreal). The work underway in the frame of the Rotterdam Convention in order to re-use the results of risks-assessment studies made on Montreal and Stockholm

¹ See recitals 1-4, 9, 15 and 24 of the Basel Convention

² Aware of the health concerns, especially in developing countries, resulting from local exposure to persistent organic pollutants, in particular impacts upon women and, through them, upon future generations.

³ Mindful of the precautionary approach as set forth in Principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, the objective of this Convention is to protect human health and the environment from persistent organic pollutants.

conventions to the benefit of risk assessment under Rotterdam Annex III also could also be a source of inspiration.

The role of SAICM which enables creating a common data base on the information related to the impacts on health and the environment must also be taken into account.

4. Questions

(a) Under which circumstances and legal conditions is it possible to communicate the information related to the impacts on health and the environment? or should only “business secrets” (on ex. special compositions and amounts of productions) be covered by confidentiality? the Stockholm Convention article 9, paragraph 5, states “For the purposes of this Convention, information on health and safety of humans and the environment shall not be regarded as confidential”.

(b) sources: there is a need to give precisions on the sources. Beyond the scope of the governmental or official information, non governmental information also play an important part in the field of health and environmental (for instance Greenpeace Vigitox documents, written for the users of hazardous or toxic products).

(c) voluntary participation of States: A larger exchange of information may be difficult to set up if countries directly concerned by data sharing are reluctant to share the results of risks assessments studies to the benefit of other multilateral processes. Some reluctance might specifically arise on the concern that more systematical data sharing may for instance lead to review the content of the current lists of products indexed in the annexes. Maybe would it be easier to defend in this context a gradual approach, based on voluntary exchanges of information and on the association of the participants to the mechanisms.

5. Proposals

National level: A common web-site displaying all the information available, from official sources as well as from non-governmental sources, would prove useful. For instance the existing information on the health and environmental impacts of DDT, or Greenpeace Vigitox documents, designed for users of dangerous or toxic products (see infra). Communication of reports and analysis following serious incidents which have caused or might cause prejudices to human health or/and to the environment might also be an important measure (see reports referred to in article 13 of the Basel Convention in case of this type of incidents).

International level:

A positive measure would consist in elaborating common patterns concerning information and data transmission related to the impacts on health and the environment. This would be useful in the first place for substances covered jointly by the Rotterdam Convention and by the Stockholm Convention. The work achieved under the Rotterdam Convention in order to re-use the results of risks-assessment studies made on Stockholm could be a source of inspiration. A mid-term perspective could consist in facilitating a systematical use of risks-assessment studies achieved in the frame of other MEA.

Work on rapprochement of websites could also prove useful. One solution could consist in a common website of the three Conventions outlining the decisions taken at the various Conferences of the Parties, gathering the information in preparation to international meetings. An outline of the decisions could be classified against common subject areas, and could in allow for easy reference to all the relevant decisions. Further work (e.g. analysis of commonalities or overlaps in substance) could also be considered. Another possibility could consist in having a common design of the websites, and links - including deep links leading directly to the relevant information- to each others websites, making it easier to maneuver. This solution might be easier to set up than one common website. A common entry page could be relevant (regardless of which of the 3 web addresses you use).

Relation to the informal consultations on International Environment Governance under the GA: The co-chairs have in their paper “Informal Consultative Process on the Institutional Framework for the United Nations’ Environment Activities” of 14 June 2007, building block 6 on IT, partnerships and advocacy, suggested a common database/clearing house mechanism to be elaborated. However, this does not seem realistic/feasible, which is the EU position. However, some kind of mechanism which informs on where to find relevant information with links to the relevant websites should be feasible.

On information in relation to accidents: Perhaps it should be considered to have a common procedure when accidents occur, for informing Parties on the likely environment and health hazards associated with an accident of the type in question as well as possible mitigation measures. This should also involve the UN OCHA-UNEP Joint Environment Unit, since it was established also for this type of incidents.