



# Book - Unit 3 - Institutional framework and the synergies process

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Site: UNITED NATIONS INFORMATION PORTAL ON MULTILATERAL ENVIRONMENTAL AGREEMENTS

Course: Introductory Course to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal and Regional Instruments on Hazardous Wastes

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# 1. Conference of the Parties

Similarly to other MEAs, the Convention establishes a Conference of the Parties (COP) as its main governing body, whose functions are specified in its article 15, for instance the authority to establish subsidiary bodies. The COP comprises representatives of all the parties to the Convention and it has decision-making power for matters under its purview.

## 2. Secretariat

Under article 16 of the Convention, a Secretariat is established, with, among its functions, that of arranging and servicing meetings of Convention bodies, preparing and transmitting reports based on the information received from Parties, preparing reports on the activities it has carried out, ensuring the necessary coordination with relevant international bodies and assisting Parties upon request in their identification of cases of illegal traffic.

The Secretariat is administered by UNEP. In 2012, a joint head was appointed to the Secretariat of the Basel Convention, the UNEP-part of the Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent procedure for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade, and the Secretariat of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. This decision was made by the three meetings of the Conferences of the Parties in the context of the process of enhancing synergies among the three global hazardous chemicals and wastes conventions.

### 3. Regional and Coordinating Centres for Capacity Building and Technology Transfer

In accordance with Article 14 of the Convention, Parties benefit from a network of fourteen Regional and Coordinating Centres for Capacity Building and Technology Transfer (BCRCs) that operate under the authority of the Conference of the Parties. The BCRCs deliver training, disseminate information, conduct awareness raising activities and technology transfer on matters relevant to the implementation of the Basel Convention in the countries they serve. The Centres are located in Argentina, China, Egypt, El Salvador, Indonesia, Islamic Republic of Iran, Nigeria, Russian Federation, Senegal, Slovak Republic, South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (Samoa), South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago, and Uruguay.

## 4. Subsidiary Bodies

In 2002, the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties established two standing subsidiaries bodies:

a. The Open-ended Working Group (OEWG) is to, among other things, assist the Conference of the Parties in developing and keeping under continuous review the implementation of the Convention's work plan, specific operational policies and decisions taken by the Conference of the Parties for the implementation of the Convention; and to consider and advise the Conference of the Parties on issues relating to policy, technical, scientific, legal, institutional, administration, finance, budgetary and other aspects of the implementation of the Convention within the approved budget, including identification of the specific needs of different regions and subregions for training and technology transfer and to consider ways and means of ensuring the establishment and functioning of the BCRCs. The work programme of the OEGW is adopted by the Conference of the Parties.

b. The Committee administering the Mechanism for Promoting Implementation and Compliance with the Basel Convention (ICC) is to assist Parties to comply with their obligations under the Convention and to facilitate, promote, monitor and aim to secure the implementation of and compliance with the obligations under the Convention. The Committee has a double mandate: under its specific submission mandate, the Committee shall consider any submission made to it in accordance with the terms of reference with a view to determining the facts and root causes of the matter of concern and, assist in its resolution; under its general reviewmandate, the Committee shall, as directed by the Conference of the Parties, review general issues of compliance and implementation under the Convention. The work programme of the Committee is adopted by the Conference of the Parties.

Over the years, the Conference of the Parties has established a variety of other subsidiary bodies with varying composition, duration and mandates. One kind of such subsidiary bodies are partnerships: the Mobile Phone Partnership Initiative (MPPI) and the Partnership for Action on Computing Equipment (PACE). Both initiatives are facilitated by the Secretariat.

## 5. Synergies among the hazardous chemicals and wastes multilateral environmental agreements

Together, the Rotterdam Convention, the Stockholm Convention, the Basel Convention and the Mercury Convention cover key elements of the life cycle management of hazardous chemicals.

The Secretariats of the Rotterdam, Stockholm and Basel Conventions prepared an issues paper in 2001 outlining potential synergies that could cover areas such as capacity building, science, technology, legal affairs and institutional matters, monitoring and reporting, and education and awareness raising. In 2002, the UNEP Governing Council endorsed such clustering and in 2006 the Conferences of the Parties of all three Conventions agreed to establish an ad hoc joint working group (AHJWG) to prepare joint recommendations on enhanced cooperation and coordination for submission to their respective Conference of the Parties.

Following the recommendations of the AHJWG, the three Conferences of the Parties adopted, in 2008 and 2009, a set of decisions on enhanced coordination and cooperation among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention, usually referred as the "synergies process", which address issues such as joint activities at the national and regional levels, joint managerial functions and services, and synchronization of budgets.

In 2011, the three Conferences of the Parties adopted identical decisions to further cooperation and coordination among the conventions, including an interim organization of the UNEP-administered secretariats, terms of reference for the review of the synergies process and holding simultaneous extraordinary meetings of the Conferences of the Parties in 2013. In December 2012, as requested by the three Conferences of the Parties, a joint head was appointed to the Secretariat of the Basel Convention, the UNEP-part of the Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention, and the Secretariat of the Stockholm Convention.

In 2013, the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions held back-to-back ordinary and simultaneous extraordinary meetings of the conferences of the parties. An omnibus decision on enhancing cooperation and coordination among the three conventions endorsed a new organizational structure of the UNEP administered Secretariat consisting of four branches covering administrative services, convention operations, technical assistance and scientific support. The Omnibus decision also requested the Secretariat to continue to undertake joint activities in areas such as technical assistance, scientific assessment, knowledge management and resource mobilization. From 4-15 May 2015, the three Conferences of the Parties will hold back to back meetings including joint sessions on joint issues. A review of the synergies arrangements is expected to take place in 2017.

Regarding the Mercury Convention, the COP may provide for enhanced cooperation and coordination between the Secretariat and the secretariats of other chemicals and wastes conventions.