



Book - Unit 3 – Institutional arrangements and the synergies process

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Course: Introductory Course to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants

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1. Conference of the Parties

Similarly to other MEAs, the Stockholm Convention establishes a Conference of the Parties (COP) as its main governing body, whose functions are specified in its Article 19, 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 20 of the Convention, a Secretariat is established, with, among its functions, that of arranging and servicing meetings of Convention bodies, facilitating assistance to the Parties on request in the implementation of the Convention, ensuring the necessary coordination with the secretariats of other relevant international bodies, and preparing and making available to the Parties periodic reports based on information received under Article 15 and other available information. 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 12, the Stockholm Convention has established a network of sixteen regional and subregional centres to provide technical assistance and to promote the transfer of technology to developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition for capacity building and transfer of technology (SCRCs), which operate under the authority of the Conference of the Parties.

The SCRCs have been mandated through the clear terms of reference and the guidance on technical assistance and the transfer of technologies along with the criteria and the methodology for the evaluation of their performances. The Centres are located in Algeria; Kenya; Senegal; South Africa; China; India; Indonesia; Iran; Kuwait; Czech Republic; Russian Federation; Brazil; Mexico; Panama; Uruguay and Spain.

4. Subsidiary body - POPs Review Committee

At its first meeting, the Conference of the Parties established a subsidiary body, the POPs Review Committee for the purpose of performing the functions assigned to it by the Convention (see Listing of POPs in Annexes A, B and/or C to the Convention). It comprises 31 members selected on the basis of equitable geographical distribution and who are composed of government-designated experts in chemical assessment or management.

5. Non-compliance

Since its first meeting, the Conference of the Parties has considered the development of procedures and institutional mechanism for determining non-compliance with the provisions of the Convention and for treatment of parties found to be in non-compliance. As mandated by Article 17, these are to be adopted “as soon as practicable”.

6. Financial and Technical Assistance

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 2 of Article 13 of the Convention states that developed country Parties shall provide new and additional financial resources to enable developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition to meet the agreed full incremental costs of implementing measures which fulfill their obligations under the Convention. The implementation of these commitments shall take into account the need for adequacy, predictability, the timely flow of funds and the importance of burden sharing among the contributing Parties.

Paragraph 3 of Article 13 of the Convention states that "Developed country Parties, and other Parties in accordance with their capabilities and in accordance with their national plans, priorities and programmes, may also provide and developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition avail themselves of financial resources to assist in their implementation of this Convention through other bilateral, regional and multilateral sources or channels."

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.

Article 14 of the Convention establishes interim financial arrangements. The institutional structure of the Global Environment Facility ("GEF") shall, on an interim basis, be the principal entity entrusted with the operations of the financial mechanism established in the Convention (articles 13 and 14). This was confirmed by further decisions of the Conference of the Parties.

7. 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.