

BRS CONVENTIONS COPS HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 24 APRIL 2017

The thirteenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Basel Convention (BC COP13), eighth meeting of the COP to the Rotterdam Convention (RC COP8), and eighth meeting of the COP to the Stockholm Convention (SC COP8) began in Geneva, Switzerland. Meeting jointly in plenary throughout the day, the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm (BRS) COPs adopted the agendas and organization of work for each COP and discussed synergies among the BRS Conventions in the morning. In the afternoon, delegates discussed international coordination and cooperation, and technical assistance and financial resources.

JOINT SESSIONS OF THE BRS COPS

OPENING CEREMONY: Mohammed Khashashneh (Jordan), President of the BC COP13, welcomed participants on behalf of Franz Perrez (Switzerland), President of RC COP8 and Sam Adu-Kumi (Ghana), President of SC COP8. BC COP President Khashashneh underlined the need to increase the efficiency of the three Conventions, calling for further synergies at national and regional levels.

BRS Executive Secretary Rolph Payet encouraged parties to make the “right decisions” for a sustainable planet, citing the listing of new chemicals and agreeing to compliance mechanisms as important for these meetings.

Bill Murray, Executive Secretary of the Rotterdam Convention, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN (FAO), underscored the need to move from input-based systems to knowledge-based systems of food production to reduce risks to human health and the environment.

Pointing to the success of the synergies arrangements among the three Conventions, Marc Chardonnens, Director, Federal Office for the Environment, Switzerland, called for the BRS Conventions to “open their doors” to the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

Lamenting the 13 million annual deaths due to pollution, Ibrahim Thiaw, Deputy Executive Director, UN Environment, stressed the need for governments, scientists, the private sector, academia and the public to cooperate to “rethink chemicals management.”

Opening Statements: Pakistan, on behalf of the ASIA PACIFIC REGION, said sound management of chemicals and wastes should be guided by the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and called for flexibility in listing certain chemicals, with attention to parties’ financial and technical circumstances.

Kenya, for the AFRICAN GROUP, expressed support for activities under the Global Monitoring Plan (GMP), suggested that the Conventions’ general trust fund could support the generation of regional data, and called for strengthening regional centres.

Georgia, for CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE, emphasized the importance of compliance mechanisms and called for technical and financial assistance to support electronic reporting.

Argentina, for GRULAC, called for sustainable and predictable funding to support implementation and emphasized the importance of strengthening regional centres.

Expressing concern that implementation is “slowing,” the EU emphasized that its industry exports several substances listed in Annex III of the RC, which demonstrates that listing chemicals supports information exchange and sustainable use.

ADOPTION OF THE COPS AGENDAS: BC COP President Khashashneh, RC COP President Perrez and SC COP President Adu-Kumi introduced their respective agendas (CHW.13/1 and Add.1; RC/COP.8/1 and Add. 1; POPS/COP.8/1 and Add.1). The EU, supported by CHILE but opposed by INDIA and IRAN, proposed that the Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) between UN Environment and the BC and SC and the MOU among UN Environment, FAO and the RC be discussed as a standalone agenda item. The agendas were adopted without amendment.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Election of officers: The Secretariat introduced the documents (CHW.13/2, INF/6; RC/COP.8/2, INF/22; POPS/COP.8/2, INF/34), with BC COP President Khashashneh calling on all regions to discuss their nominees to the COPs bureaux as well as to the relevant expert groups, and report on progress later in the week. INDIA objected to the proposal for countries to submit the curricula vitae of their nominees for the Chemical Review Committee (CRC), stressing that countries can nominate “anyone they see fit.” Delegates agreed to note this concern in the meeting report, and resume consideration of this item later in the meetings.

Organization of work: The Secretariat introduced the documents (CHW.13/1/Add.1, INF/1-4; RC/COP.8/1/Add.1, INF/1-4; POPS/COP.8/1/Add.1, INF/1-4). The EU proposed a contact group on joint issues for the three Conventions, including MOUs between UN Environment and the BC and SC, and UN Environment, FAO and RC, and a contact or Friends of the Chair group to discuss proposals to amend RC Articles 16 (technical assistance) and 22 (adoption and amendment of annexes). IRAN proposed a contact group on the RC compliance mechanism. BC COP President Khashashneh reminded parties that contact groups will be discussed later and the organization of work was adopted.

Credentials: The Secretariat introduced the documents (CHW.13/1/Add.1, RC/COP.8/1/Add.1, and POPS/COP.8/1/Add.1). BC COP President Khashashneh welcomed as new

parties: Angola, Sierra Leone and Khazakstan to the BC; Iraq, Malta, Sierra Leone and Tunisia to the RC; and Iraq and Malta to the SC.

ENHANCING COOPERATION AND COORDINATION AMONG THE BRS CONVENTIONS

The Secretariat introduced the documents (CHW.13/20, 22-25 and 22/Add.1; RC/COP.8/20-24 and 21/Add.1; POPS/COP.8/19 and 25-28 and 25/Add.1).

On the review of the BRS synergies arrangements, CHINA stated that more attention should be paid to the measures to enhance efficiency and effectiveness. INDIA recommended a specific, dedicated budget line for synergies and reinforced, with CHINA, that there should be no technology transfer-related synergies. The EU highlighted that the synergies process has enhanced the operation of the Conventions. SWITZERLAND underlined that the synergies process supports a lifecycle approach to chemicals and wastes management.

On synergies with the Minamata Convention, CHINA, JAMAICA and the US expressed caution about welcoming integration of the Minamata Convention and preempting any decisions to be made by the Minamata Convention COP. SWITZERLAND suggested that the BRS COPs indicate willingness to accept the Minamata Convention and to prepare, should the Minamata Convention COP decide to join BRS synergies. Kenya, for the AFRICAN GROUP, called for consideration of the possible integration at these COPs. COLOMBIA indicated that the entry into force of the Minamata Convention should lead to coordinated work in chemicals and waste management.

The COPs established a joint contact group on the review of synergies arrangements.

INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION AND

COORDINATION: The Secretariat introduced the documents (UNEP/CHW.13/19, INF/38, 39, 54, 56, 67, 69; RC/COP.8/20, INF/27, 28, 42, 46, 49, 50; POPS/COP.8/24, INF/44, 45, 58, 59, 63, 64). Several parties noted links to the 2030 Agenda. The EU suggested integrating the overall orientation and guidance for achieving the 2020 goal of sound management of chemicals into BRS work. KENYA suggested cooperation with other entities such as UN Development Programme (UNDP).

The Interim Secretariat of the Minamata Convention on Mercury reported on joint activities with the BRS Secretariat and encouraged enhanced joint efforts to combat illegal trade and traffic in hazardous chemicals and wastes.

UN Industrial and Development Organization (UNIDO) highlighted its joint declaration of intent on chemical leasing, noting it is open to additional partners.

UN Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) noted its POPs modeling work could be useful for evaluating the effectiveness of the SC. UN Environment Management Group (EMG) outlined its mandate to support enhanced coordination in the UN system on electronic waste.

The US emphasized that the BRS Secretariat's work should be limited to implementation of the Conventions and should use data generated by the parties.

Discussions on this matter were forwarded to the contact group on synergies.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: The Secretariat introduced the documents (CHW.13/11, 12, 17 and INFs 29/Rev.1, 34-36; FAO/RC/COP.8/17 and INFs 24-25; and POPS/COP.8/16, Rev.1, 17 and INFs 22, 23 and 25) highlighting the proposed four-year technical assistance plan for the period 2018-2021, and the termination of the framework agreement of the BC regional centre in El Salvador.

IRAN, SOUTH AFRICA and LIBERIA called for additional financial resources to implement the four-year technical assistance plan. MALDIVES called for special consideration for small island developing states (SIDS). The EU welcomed the increase in the plan's implementation timeframe.

CHINA underscored the need to mobilize the resources of UNDP, UNIDO and other institutions for activities under the BRS Conventions. SOUTH AFRICA noted that technical assistance and capacity building are fundamental to implementation and must be considered alongside compliance.

BELARUS called for the development of a register of technical operators who provide services with best available technology (BAT) and best environment practices (BEP).

On BC and SC regional and coordinating centres, several countries expressed support for strengthening the role of regional centres. Indicating that the regional centres' mandate should reflect synergies, BRAZIL proposed its SC regional centre in São Paulo also serve as a BC regional centre. CHINA highlighted the need to address the potential funding shortage causing the termination of regional centres. GUINEA-BISSAU expressed concern that regional centres do not always work closely with countries, with NAMIBIA suggesting further support of national governments for the centres. The EU asked for clarification on the status of inactive centres.

The SC REGIONAL CENTRE IN SPAIN presented their work on marine systems, biodiversity, and human health. GREENPEACE highlighted the need to address marine plastic waste.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES: The Secretariat introduced its note on the financial mechanism (UNEP/POPS/COP.8/18). The GEF Secretariat reported on the first two years of the GEF 6 period, highlighting key elements of its chemicals and waste programming.

COLOMBIA called for strategies to create a bigger role for the private sector in financing and expressed concern about potential cutbacks in resources in GEF 6. IRAN called for either increasing the resources for the GEF or creating new mechanisms for the BC and RC and called for the GEF to take a technical rather than political approach.

The EU welcomed the operationalization of the Special Programme and called for further progress on mainstreaming and private sector involvement. The BRS SECRETARIAT and UNEP both provided updates on their participation in and implementation of the Special Programme. KENYA for the African Group welcomed the second call issued under the Programme and invited parties to apply.

Supporting the use of the 2030 Agenda's Technology Facilitation Mechanism, GRULAC stressed the need for additional, predictable financing to ensure implementation in developing countries, with ARGENTINA emphasizing identification and mobilization of co-financing. BELARUS called for loans with non-commercial interest rates to enable countries with economies in transition to address POPs-related issues.

IPEN underscored the importance of operationalizing the polluter pays principle as a means of ensuring private sector engagement.

The COPs established a contact group on technical assistance and financial resources.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Participants packed plenary for the opening of the TripleCOP. One looking for a seat called this "potentially a good problem," if it signaled the growing profile of these agreements. The growing reach of the Conventions was noted by several delegates drawing connections to a range of intergovernmental organizations, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, and the Minamata Convention. Even further afield, one delegate noted "the biodiversity cluster is looking to us to show how synergies can work."

Despite the hints of higher salience, several delegates worried about the impact of the BRS Conventions. One noted that the effectiveness evaluation raised "red flags," and others referred to a widening gulf between obligations and implementation, suggesting that much of the next two weeks will focus on strategies for effectively allocating the COPs' limited resources to achieve their objectives.