

BRS Conventions COPs Highlights: Tuesday, 6 May 2025

After a lengthy debate, Basel Convention (BC) delegates agreed to further discuss compliance issues. The BC also took up technical, strategic, and legal matters throughout the day. The Rotterdam Convention (RC) agreed to list carbosulfan, but not the other chemicals raised so far at this meeting, and RC delegates explored effectiveness questions. The Stockholm Convention (SC) finalized work on medium-chain chlorinated paraffins (MCCPs) in the contact group.

The [meeting documents](#) can be found on the BRS website.

Joint Issues

Technical Assistance: The Secretariat introduced the relevant documents, including reports on technical assistance activities (CHW.17/15, INF/20, 42, 43; RC/COP.12/18, INF/20-22; POPS/COP.12/15, INF/28-30), and on the BC and SC regional centres (CHW.17/17, INF/44; POPS/COP.12/16, INF/31).

Supporting the decision, the EU emphasized the need to ensure the effectiveness of capacity-building efforts, which should be evaluated regularly. TUVVALU called for reference to the specific needs of small island developing states (SIDS).

Many developing countries thanked the Secretariat for its technical assistance activities. CHILE encouraged others to take advantage of these activities. MALAYSIA cited needs for targeted training and institutional development.

On regional centres, many countries lauded their role in supporting the implementation of the Conventions, including on plastics and polychlorinated biphenyls. They called for their strengthening, including through financial assistance. TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO called for moving from technology transfer to co-ownership. BRAZIL suggested reaffirming a prior decision that regional centres can initiate projects related to all three Conventions.

This item will be continued later in the week.

Basel Convention

Scientific and technical matters: National Reporting: The COP tasked the Secretariat with revising the draft decision (CHW.17/7) to reflect a process to collect submissions for potential revisions to table 9 (illegal traffic), for consideration by the Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG). The revised decision will be considered later in the week.

Electronic approaches to the notification and movement documents: The COP adopted the decision (CRP.16).

Work Programme of the OEWG: BC COP17 President Anita Sowińska drew attention to textile waste in the OEWG Work Programme, noting that there is no agreement on the priority level to afford to this issue. She suggested a medium priority as a compromise.

SAUDI ARABIA, INDIA, KAZAKHSTAN, PAKISTAN, and BRAZIL said the OEWG should focus on implementation issues and, therefore, this new work should be accorded a low priority.

The EU, CHILE, and BANGLADESH called for a high priority for this work.

Expressing flexibility, SOUTH AFRICA preferred assigning a low priority, while CÔTE D'IVOIRE preferred a high priority.

The Technical Matters contact group will reconsider this issue in the context of the entire work programme.

Other Matters: BC COP17 President Sowińska drew attention to a conference room paper (CRP) submitted by many parties to return to the decision that amended the Terms of Reference (TOR) of the BC Implementation and Compliance Committee (ICC) (CRP.14). Responding to a question from CHILE, the Secretariat clarified that the substance of the decision was adopted, pending budgetary approval.

MEXICO, South Africa, for the AFRICAN REGION, Saudi Arabia, for the ARAB GROUP, INDIA, TOGO, PAKISTAN, ESWATINI, ALGERIA, BAHRAIN, INDONESIA, BRAZIL, ECUADOR, IRAN, EL SALVADOR, BARBADOS, IRAQ, MALAYSIA, BANGLADESH, CUBA, QATAR, VENEZUELA, ZIMBABWE, LEBANON, OMAN, STATE OF PALESTINE, MOROCCO, and TAJIKISTAN supported the CRP and a contact group to discuss this issue, objecting to the new “punitive measures” that the adopted decision would allow the ICC to recommend to the COP. COLOMBIA said that while there was some value in parts of the paragraph in question, they opposed other parts as going well beyond the facilitative work of the ICC.

MEXICO stressed that the compliance agenda item should not be reopened, but instead discussed under Other Matters. SOUTH AFRICA suggested that the African Group’s regional statement was cut off during the plenary. Some cited the higher workload on the day the decision was taken, due to the High-Level Segment (HLS), and the unusual lack of discussion of this issue in a contact group. CÔTE D'IVOIRE suggested having the HLS meet before or after the COP in the future.

Acknowledging that punitive measures for failure to submit national reports are a serious matter, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION supported contact group discussions.

JAPAN, NORWAY, NEW ZEALAND, the EU, and SWITZERLAND expressed reservations about the CRP because it could set the precedent of reopening adopted decisions. Some also said there are rules of procedure to revisit a decision but they are not being followed, and noted that, if this CRP is adopted, two decisions will contradict one another.

BRAZIL and MEXICO underlined that the intent is not to undermine the integrity of the decision-making process but give proper consideration to critical matters of compliance.

BC COP17 President Sowińska highlighted that an adopted decision cannot be opened at the same meeting unless two thirds of the parties agree. Noting general agreement that the rules

of procedure had been followed and hearing no objections to considering the CRP, she proposed, and the COP agreed, to have the BC Legal Matters contact group take up its consideration.

The EU, NORWAY, NEW ZEALAND, and SWITZERLAND did not oppose the proposal but called for their reservation to be reflected in the meeting report to ensure this does not become a possible precedent.

Rotterdam Convention

Listing of chemicals in Annex III: Acetochlor: The Secretariat presented relevant documents (RC/COP.12/6, Add.1, and INF/8). RC COP12 President Shamimi reminded delegates that at COP9, in decision RC-9/5, parties agreed that all requirements for listing were met.

SWITZERLAND, the UK, the EU, NORWAY, NEW ZEALAND, BOTSWANA, SERBIA, MAURITIUS, BOSNIA AND HERZEGOVINA, VANUATU, COOK ISLANDS, TONGA, TUVALU, MONTENEGRO, GUYANA, and CAMEROON supported listing. The EU and the UK stressed that the criteria for final regulatory actions (FRA) and listing were fully met, and NORWAY, reminding that listing is not a ban, hoped that parties could find a way forward and agree on the listing.

INDIA and DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO did not oppose the listing, with the latter suggesting that the UN Food and Agriculture Organization and the World Health Organization are, in practice, “committed to banning products” listed in RC, and calling for cheaper alternatives to acetochlor.

MALAWI, KENYA, and IRAN stated they cannot support the listing until viable alternatives are available, with MALAWI requesting contact group discussions. ARGENTINA, PARAGUAY, GUATEMALA, and VENEZUELA objected to listing. Recognizing that RC listing is not a ban, they cited private certification bodies’ practices that create indirect barriers to trade and socio-economic implications.

The CHEMICALS AND WASTE YOUTH PLATFORM and PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK (PAN) supported listing, citing adverse health effects, especially on children’s and youths’ development since it is an endocrine disruptor, and stating that FRAs were based on risk evaluations as required by the RC.

CROPLIFE stated that acetochlor has not met the criteria of RC Annex III, questioned the validity of the Chemicals Review Committee (CRC)’s recommendation, and cited trade barriers caused by listings.

RC COP12 President Shamimi suggested forwarding the issue to the RC Listings contact group.

PARAGUAY, ARGENTINA, VENEZUELA, and MEXICO did not support contact group discussions due to the group’s workload. The EU recalled that the RC COP had already agreed that the listing proposal meets RC listing requirements, which warrants contact group discussions. ZIMBABWE queried the value of the discussions in the absence of new scientific data.

The RC COP deferred consideration of listing acetochlor in Annex III to its next meeting.

Carbosulfan: The Secretariat introduced the documents (RC/COP.12/7, Add.1).

KYRGYZSTAN, URUGUAY, the EU, SWITZERLAND, the UK, TANZANIA, SRI LANKA, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, MEXICO, IRAN, SENEGAL, NEW ZEALAND, NORWAY, SERBIA, CHILE, VENEZUELA, LIBERIA, and PAN supported the listing. CROPLIFE opposed, questioning the risk evaluation and the claim that it meets the criteria for listing.

With applause, the RC COP adopted the decision listing carbosulfan in RC Annex III.

Paraquat dichloride formulations: The Secretariat introduced the proposal to list in Annex III (RC/COP.12/12).

CHILE, the EU, the UK, AUSTRALIA, NORWAY, TANZANIA, NEW ZEALAND, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC, SENEGAL, SERBIA, TOGO, and SOUTH AFRICA supported listing.

GUATEMALA, ARGENTINA, PARAGUAY, ECUADOR, GUYANA, and VENEZUELA opposed the listing. ARGENTINA said they cannot accept the risk evaluation because of an incorrect use of the chemical, and others stressed the lack of viable alternatives and the resulting risk for food security and farmers’ livelihoods.

The INTERNATIONAL POLLUTANTS ELIMINATION NETWORK (IPEN), PAN UK, and RAPAL URUGUAY reminded that listing under the RC does not prevent the trade or use of chemicals and reported that 72 countries have banned paraquat without any proven impact on agricultural production.

The COP agreed to forward the issue to the RC Listings contact group.

Enhancing the Effectiveness of the RC: The RC COP took up a proposal by Kazakhstan to amend the RC rules of procedure and allow for an item to be considered as concluded and removed from the agenda if it is not completed after three ordinary meetings (CRP.2).

Stressing the importance of consensus, KAZAKHSTAN presented its proposal as a practical step to avoid repeated deadlocks on listing chemicals and reviews of outdated scientific evidence, and ensure more efficient use of limited resources, adding that it would still be possible to reintroduce items through the normal procedures, with updated data, to maintain the scientific relevance of the process.

COLOMBIA, SWITZERLAND, the EU, COOK ISLANDS, TONGA, VANUATU, TUVALU, MARSHALL ISLANDS, MEXICO, GUINEA, MALDIVES, TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO, the UK, NORWAY, NEW ZEALAND, SOUTH AFRICA, JAPAN, and AUSTRALIA opposed the proposal, noting it does not solve the “paralysis problem” or contribute to the effectiveness of the listing process but rather weakens it. COLOMBIA, the EU, GUINEA, TONGA, IPEN, and others suggested voting on a listing after three consecutive attempts to list it.

IPEN, UNION AID ABROAD, and PAN expressed deep concern as the proposal would reward and incentivize the continued, unjustified blocking of listing, fundamentally undermining the RC.

KYRGYZSTAN reiterated the proposal and, with the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, ZIMBABWE, GUATEMALA, ARGENTINA, and ECUADOR, called for proper consideration in a contact group.

The COP agreed to have the RC Effectiveness contact group take up the issue.

Article 16: The COP considered the proposal from a group of African countries to amend Article 16 (technical assistance) (RC/COP.12/16/Add.1).

The EU and SAUDI ARABIA opposed the proposal, with the EU arguing that relevant and effective decisions have already been taken on technical assistance.

Objecting to COP12 President Hamimi’s proposals to close the matter or include it in the provisional agenda of the next COP, SOUTH AFRICA, ECUADOR, TANZANIA, ZIMBABWE, BRAZIL, and ETHIOPIA supported discussing the proposal further in a contact group.

The COP agreed to forward the issue to the Financial Resources contact group.

Information dissemination: The COP agreed to take note of the report on implementing the information dissemination strategy (RC/COP.12/INF/17).

Contact Groups

BC Technical Matters: The contact group, co-chaired by Nawaf Bilasi (Saudi Arabia) and Martien Janssen (the Netherlands), worked on the draft decision on the plastic waste amendments. Delegates agreed with the deadlines: for parties and others to provide comments on the amendments by 28 February 2026; for the Secretariat to make available its draft report by 31 October 2026; and for parties and others to submit comments on the draft report by 18 January 2027. The contact group included in the work programme of the OEWG for 2026–2027: compiling comments on the plastic waste amendments; considering possible further activities that could be conducted under the BC; and updating several technical guidelines to reflect the amendments.

On including used textiles and textile wastes in the OEWG's work programme, delegates failed again to agree on the priority level.

BC Strategic Matters: Co-chaired by Ann De Jonghe (Belgium) and Lendita Dika (North Macedonia), the contact group continued with its second reading of the draft 2025–2031 strategic framework (CHW.17/3/Add.1). The group adopted Objectives 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4 on the environmentally sound management (ESM) of hazardous and other wastes.

On Objective 4.1 (to promote cooperation with national, regional and international bodies), one country opposed adding national, regional, and international “instruments.” For this objective, delegates agreed on Indicator 2 (number of activities as per BC COP decisions carried out in synergy among the BRS Conventions) and Indicator 4 (number of activities in cooperation with other conventions and international bodies). The contact group agreed to delete Indicator 3 on decisions by other conventions, bodies, or instruments calling for cooperation with the BC.

For Objective 4.2 (supporting developing countries in delivering activities for the ESM of hazardous wastes and other wastes), delegates agreed to rephrase Indicator 4 to read as “number of COP decisions that provide the means of dissemination, learning, and use of a technical guideline or guidance document.” The contact group agreed to leave Objective 4.3 on supporting developing countries in implementing BC provisions unchanged.

On evaluation and implementation, they agreed to specify that the Secretariat's reports would “convey progress made, based on information collected and data gaps identified, using the indicators.” Delegates did not manage to remove brackets from a new paragraph calling for consideration of SIDS' and developing countries' circumstances, challenges, and needs in formulating and applying the framework's objectives. Discussions continued into the evening.

BC Legal: The contact group, co-chaired by Perine Nkosi Kasonde (Zambia) and Jason Dunn (Australia), could not agree on the introductory text for section B (recovery, recycling or reclamation operations). This Annex defines wastes governed by the Convention. A few wanted to limit the scope to hazardous wastes, opposed by others who pointed to the need to control Annex II wastes, such as mixed plastic wastes. Other options included no text or to refer to Article 1 (scope of the Convention) or 2.1 (definition of waste).

Delegates agreed that the introductory text to Annex IV (disposal operations) would specify that the Annex covers all disposal operations, regardless of their legal status and whether they are environmentally sound. There was general agreement that the Annex IV amendment would take effect on 1 January 2030, should countries be able to conclude their work at this meeting. Discussions continued into the evening.

RC Effectiveness: In the contact group, co-chaired by Linroy Christian (Antigua and Barbuda) and Karoliina Anttonen (Finland), delegates agreed to start with the list of recommendations based on the country submissions compiled by

the Secretariat in paragraph 62 of RC/COP.12/INF/18, expressing views in light of the CRPs by Brazil (CRP.4) and the EU (CRP.8).

Parties expressed general views on what they mean by improving the effectiveness of the RC: some saw the COP's failure to list chemicals recommended by the CRC as a main challenge, while others pointed to the pre-listing stage and listing implications. Major debates revolved around proposals to establish an effectiveness committee, improving the listing process, and clarifying the extent to which the RC COP should and could decide on implications beyond its scope.

Addressing concerns on the overlap between the CRC and the proposed effectiveness committee, the proponent of CRP.4 clarified that they would see this body engage at the “pre-CRC review stage,” to help parties develop stronger FRA notifications and to assist with technical and capacity matters. Many parties objected to a new subsidiary body, citing budgetary implications and stating that the CRC fulfils its purpose under the RC effectively. They said the problem arises at the COP when some parties block listing recommendations. In response, several developing parties brought up implications of listings on trade, and some suggested considering the socio-economic implications of listings, as done by the POPs Review Committee (POPRC). Objecting to comparisons with POPRC, several delegates stated that the RC and the SC have very different scopes and purposes. One group of parties stressed that anything that makes the listing process more complicated is their red line.

Aiming to address the implications of RC listing, several parties supported clarifying its impact on the highly hazardous pesticide definition in the International Code of Conduct on Pesticide Management, and its use by private certification bodies. Other parties stressed the need to stay within the scope of the RC and not encroach on other bodies' mandates. Observers rejected the claim about private certification schemes, reporting that major private certification bodies already designated the chemicals currently proposed, but not listed in RC, as hazardous.

There was also general support among developing parties for interpretation at CRC meetings and translation of documents, with some parties concerned about budgetary implications. The Co-Chairs will propose new text based on the views expressed.

SC Listing: Co-chaired by Timo Seppälä (Finland) and Lamin Jaiteh (the Gambia), a drafting group focused on the preamble of the decision on the UV-328 amendment proposal. As a contact group, they quickly agreed to the decisions related to listing MCCPs in Annex A with exemptions.

In the Corridors

The morning opened with a bold proposal to revisit a decision adopted by the BC last week. There was wrangling to address the substantive concerns while sending a strong procedural signal that this is not a precedent. In the decision, a party that does not submit a national report for five years could face serious repercussions, including revoking its ability to participate in the COP's decision making. For many countries, it was simply too punitive. Nearly all countries that spoke wished to uphold the sanctity of the decision-making process. This was particularly salient, given a rumor that a party may ask to reopen the decision to list a chemical in Annex A of the SC.

The issue was referred to the BC Legal Matters contact group, which is already stretched to its limit trying to finalize Annex IV revisions. Some wondered aloud if this is possible, but another clarified, “if we fail, the work stops, there is no revision” of an annex that another called “very old and a little outdated.”

These delegates heard applause from the SC Listing contact group after it adopted the MCCPs decisions. Late in the afternoon, moods lifted as applause rose up in plenary. The RC agreed to list carbosulfan in Annex III, eight years after the CRC's recommendation.

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