

BRS Conventions COPs Highlights: Wednesday, 7 May 2025

The Basel Convention (BC) adopted a decision related to the e-waste amendments, and continued considering legal, strategic, and technical matters in contact groups. The Rotterdam Convention (RC) agreed to list fenthion ultra-low volume formulations as a severely hazardous pesticide. The [meeting documents](#) can be found on the BRS website.

Joint Sessions

Technical Assistance: The COP resumed discussions. NEPAL cited their limited technical capacity and called for enhanced technical assistance from the BRS Secretariat, regional centres, and donor parties. NAMIBIA appreciated the technical and financial support of the BC and SC regional centre (BCRC-SCRC) in South Africa and urged continued support for the regional centres. BANGLADESH urged increased support for: institutional strengthening; operationalizing extended producer responsibility schemes and circular economy frameworks; updating national inventories; and targeted capacity building for local authorities. PAKISTAN supported the 2026–2029 technical assistance plan.

The UN FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO) presented the RC Secretariat's work on technical assistance and highlighted the FAO's logistical, financial, and technical support for these activities. BCRC-SCRCs in Uruguay and South Africa thanked Suman Sharma for his work and wished him a happy retirement. The BCRC-SCRC in South Africa highlighted its projects to strengthen the region's capacity to meet obligations under the SC.

The INTERNATIONAL POLLUTANTS ELIMINATION NETWORK (IPEN) underscored the equal importance of "effective" technical assistance, information exchange, technology transfer, and assistance to find viable substitutes and eliminate remaining stocks. The ENVIRONMENT AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT ORGANIZATION (ESDO) emphasized the need for increased technical assistance, particularly on plastic waste classifications.

The COP adopted the part of the draft decision related to regional centres (CHW.17/17; POPS/COP.12/16), pending budgetary approval, and mandated the Financial Resources contact group to work on the technical assistance part of the decision (CHW.17/16; RC/COP.12/18; POPS/COP.12/15).

Synergies in Preventing and Combating Illegal Traffic and Trade in Hazardous Chemicals and Wastes: The Secretariat introduced the relevant documents (CHW.17/25; RC/COP.12/24; POPS/COP.12/27).

SENEGAL supported the decision, and KAZAKHSTAN, with the EU and BANGLADESH, praised the Secretariat's work.

The EU supported further work on identifying substances and products containing chemicals and highlighted the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's recommendations and best practices.

DOMINICAN REPUBLIC lauded the seminar on the legal framework on the illegal traffic and trade in hazardous chemicals and wastes for Spanish-speaking countries and reiterated their

commitment to supporting coordination between the BRS Conventions to tackle illegal traffic.

BANGLADESH emphasized the need for a regional approach based on the possible or identified trafficking groups.

PAKISTAN called for enhancing the capacity of customs officials and proposed training national focal points. DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO called for more targeted assistance. GUINEA requested further technical and financial assistance to develop national inventories of hazardous chemicals and wastes.

IPEN reported hazardous waste illegally exported to Tunisia by developed countries and urged countries to provide information on the prevention of illegal traffic and the products exported.

BCRCs in Panama and Argentina highlighted activities carried out under this agenda item, including the training workshop mentioned by Dominican Republic and the development of a certificate from the universities of Panama and Buenos Aires.

The COP adopted the draft decision as amended by the Secretariat, pending budgetary approval.

From Science to Action: The Secretariat introduced the draft decision and report on the activities to implement the road map to enhance science-based action (CHW.17/26, INF/68; RC/COP.12/25, INF/38; POPS/COP.12/28, INF/57).

The EU stressed the need for sound science and supported the decision. PAKISTAN welcomed the road map, particularly cooperation with academia and other organizations.

CHEMICALS AND WASTE YOUTH PLATFORM lamented that the harms of rights holders are often discussed after countries debate economic factors. They called for support for early-career scientists, citizen science, and national science-policy platforms. ESDO called the road map crucial to facilitate information sharing and science-informed decisions.

Calling for greater attention to e-waste, MUKTI MANDIRI LESTARI called for including the private sector in the road map, reporting that waste producers export recyclable materials rather than engage local recovery companies, such as theirs.

The MARINE ECOSYSTEMS PROTECTED AREA (MEPA) TRUST stressed that local communities have the will, ambition, science, and practices, but need equipment to scale up their pilot projects and realize circular systems.

The COP adopted the decision.

Clearing-house Mechanism for Information Exchange:

The Secretariat introduced the draft decision and work plan (CHW.17/23, INF/64; RC/COP.12/22, INF/35; POPS/COP.12/25, INF/53).

CHINA, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, KUWAIT, ALGERIA, SAUDI ARABIA, YEMEN, JORDAN, OMAN, LEBANON, IRAQ, and QATAR called for translation into all UN languages. MEXICO and COLOMBIA recognized the importance of translation, but stressed any additional translation must come from voluntary contributions to avoid significant budgetary implications.

The COP agreed to ask the Secretariat to revise, in consultation with interested parties, the draft work plan for consideration in plenary later in the meeting.

Mainstreaming Gender: The Secretariat presented the documents (CHW.17/24; RC/COP.12/23; POPS/COP.12/26).

MEXICO, the EU, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, COLOMBIA, and others underscored the importance of equality and gender considerations and welcomed the Gender Action Plan and Secretariat's efforts on awareness raising and mainstreaming.

MEXICO expressed concern with the Plan being dependent on availability of resources, and called for all to find means for implementation on this key issue.

COLOMBIA highlighted rural women's experiences, while BRAZIL noted that it is a matter of effectiveness in achieving the objectives of the BC.

PAKISTAN pointed to local initiatives on gender, integrating gender specific indicators in national monitoring systems, and strengthening training and capacity building for women, including in environmental governance.

SOUTH AFRICA called for extending the training to members of the subsidiary bodies. Noting it had been one of the case study countries, KENYA called for more studies in low- and middle-income countries.

ARGENTINA called for replacing "gender" with "of women" or add a footnote explaining gender refers to men and women and, with PARAGUAY, drew attention to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

IPEN highlighted equal participation at the local level, integrating gender impact assessment in policy frameworks and sex-disaggregated data, and regional centres as platforms for research and information exchange. CHEMICALS AND WASTE YOUTH PLATFORM underscored the need for meaningful direct engagement with young women and girls. The OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS emphasized the inclusion of intersectionality and safeguarding women's leadership. MEPA TRUST called for a wide gender lens and hearing from the local level for solutions.

The COP agreed to have the Secretariat report on the Gender Action Plan at the next COPs, and to invite all to carry out the Plan's activities and share experiences with the Secretariat.

Basel Convention

Amendments to Annexes II, VIII and IX on e-waste: The COP adopted the decision on amendments to annexes II, VIII, and IX on e-waste (CRP.17).

National reporting: On the decision (CRP.20), INDIA, supported by SAUDI ARABIA and IRAN, noted the additional reporting burden on developing countries, including addressing different waste types. SAUDI ARABIA called for removing text taking note of revised practical guidance on the development of inventories of plastic waste.

INDIA requested deleting the paragraph taking note of "the revised practical guidance on the development of inventories of plastic waste, obsolete pesticides and pesticide-container waste, and waste batteries containing lithium," worried that some methodologies were prioritized over others. They also requested deletion of text "inviting parties to provide detailed national statistics on the generation of waste types for which practical guidance on the development of inventories is available."

The COP agreed to these deletions and adopted the draft decision as amended.

Report of the meeting: The COP went through the meeting report (CHW.17/L.1/Add.1).

On paragraph 89 on the adoption of the decision on compliance, SOUTH AFRICA referred to a disruption during the statement by the African Group on 1 May and, with CHILE, called for it to be reflected in the report of the meeting. CHILE, supported by the RUSSIAN FEDERATION, suggested bracketing the paragraph for the time being, and adding "to be completed." The COP agreed to the suggestion and will return to paragraph 89 later in the week.

Rotterdam Convention

Listing of chemicals in Annex III: Fenthion ultra-low volume formulations: The Secretariat introduced the relevant documents (RC/COP.12/10, Add.1), noting that the COP agreed in 2015 that the listing criteria were met, but could not agree to include the substance in Annex III as a severely hazardous pesticide formulation (SHPF).

URUGUAY, BRAZIL, SWITZERLAND, INDONESIA, KENYA, the UK, NORWAY, ARGENTINA, INDIA, NEW ZEALAND, GHANA, TANZANIA, PARAGUAY, PAKISTAN, CABO VERDE, IRAQ, IRAN, CAMEROON, BOTSWANA, MEXICO, SOUTH AFRICA, ZAMBIA, GUYANA, CHILE, ETHIOPIA, the US, and PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK AFRICA supported listing.

Many reported that they have domestically restricted or banned its use, and cited its significant toxicity. Several, including CHAD, which originally submitted the SHPF proposal, also recalled that the criteria for listing were met. CHAD, GHANA, and others reported that fenthion was a control method for quelea quelea birds and called for technical assistance to deploy alternatives, including integrated pest management approaches.

The RC COP adopted the draft decision listing fenthion ultra-low volume formulations in Annex III.

Chrysotile Asbestos: The Secretariat introduced the documents (RC/COP.12/9, Add.1), recalling that since 2006, the COP has agreed that the listing criteria are met, but cannot agree to list the substance.

MALAYSIA, MAURITIUS, SOUTH AFRICA, AUSTRALIA, SWITZERLAND, the EU, the UK, URUGUAY, LIBERIA, NEW ZEALAND, CABO VERDE, MEXICO, TANZANIA, CAMEROON, VANUATU, COOK ISLANDS, TUVALU, NORWAY, SOMALIA, ARGENTINA, BRAZIL, IRAN, JORDAN, PARAGUAY, ETHIOPIA, SENEGAL, NIGERIA, BURUNDI, SAUDI ARABIA, ESWATINI, IRAQ, GABON, ECUADOR, and CHILE supported listing.

Many characterized chrysotile asbestos as carcinogenic and dangerous, particularly for workers. Some called for technical support for managing the waste from the building sector and supporting health systems treating exposed workers, especially those in the informal waste sector.

IPEN called chrysotile asbestos use and trade "shameful" and, with ESDO, urged listing. CHEMICALS AND WASTE YOUTH PLATFORM lamented that countries "continue to negotiate with generations of human lives for the sake of economic complacency."

SOLIDAR SUISSE, and some unions, suggested that the chrysotile asbestos lobby uses the RC's failure to list to say it can be used safely and avoid health labelling. UNION AID ABROAD reported that chrysotile asbestos is responsible for 70% of all occupational cancers globally. The AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL OF TRADE UNIONS said more than 200,000 people a year die from asbestos-related disease, stressing workers' rights to know.

Opposing listing, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION and KYRGYZSTAN said there is no evidence that chrysotile asbestos is harmful. KAZAKHSTAN said evidence for listing was insufficient. LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC, BELARUS, INDIA, and KYRGYZSTAN cited the importance for their economies. ZIMBABWE called for deferring consideration until new evidence is available.

Saying it is easy to accuse industry, the CONFEDERATION OF EMPLOYERS IN KAZAKHSTAN underlined the value of the jobs created in the chrysotile cement industry. INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCE OF TRADE UNION ORGANIZATIONS "CHRYBOTILE" opposed listing, saying workers know how to use it safely. CHRYBOTILE ASSOCIATION claimed delegates should "not be carried away by rhetoric," saying there is no evidence of adverse effects in high-density chrysotile asbestos.

The COP agreed to include this substance on the provisional agenda of the next COP.

Status of implementation: The Secretariat introduced the document and draft decision (RC/COP.12/4). PAKISTAN supported it.

The EU urged importing parties to submit missing import responses as soon as possible, and developing countries to submit proposals if they encounter problems with the procedure. They also stressed the low number of final regulatory action (FRA) notifications compared to the last reporting period.

SWITZERLAND reported it has automated its export procedure through an electronic form provided to exporters

and the automatic sending of emails, such as reminders and confirmation links, to importing countries.

The RUSSIAN FEDERATION underscored that a table on the quantities of exports in RC/COP.12/INF/7 includes asbestos and asked the Secretariat to specify that it is amphibole, not chrysotile asbestos.

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF THE CONGO, echoed by SENEGAL, urged exporting countries to provide more detailed information on exported substances not listed in Annex III and to respect the sovereignty of importing countries. VENEZUELA asked exporting countries to update their contact information.

The COP adopted the decision, pending budgetary approval.

Rules of procedure: The COP deferred consideration to the next COP.

Contact Groups

BC Legal: Co-chaired by Perine Nkosi Kasonde (Zambia) and Jason Dunn (Australia), discussions focused on the decision and way forward on BC Annex IV (Disposal operations). Many stressed the need to adopt the annex but continue work on open burning (D.17), co-processing (R.14), and preparing for reuse (R.15), which otherwise would leave open loopholes that would negatively impact the Global South.

The group agreed to avoid overburdening the expert working group on the review of annexes and have it focus on Annexes I and III. They considered a proposal for revised decision text that would defer some tasks to the Secretariat, and a process on the three pending issues in Annex IV involving inviting submissions for further consideration by Open-Ended Working Group (OEWG) 16 and COP19. On the latter, differences emerged on whether submissions should focus on the three pending issues or to keep the scope open.

BC Technical: In the contact group, co-chaired by Nawaf Bilasi (Saudi Arabia) and Martien Janssen (the Netherlands), delegates focused on further activities related to the plastic waste amendments, then turned to textile waste in the OEWG work programme.

On the plastic waste amendments, a group requested emphasizing the unique challenges of small island developing states (SIDS) in the Secretariat's technical support activities. This was followed by requests to include all developing countries and economies in transition. Despite observations this dilutes the original intent, they agreed to text that accommodates all of the requests. The decision was then agreed.

On textiles, Co-Chair Bilasi proposed affording the issue a medium priority level on the work programme. After a query about how the OEWG operationalizes the priority levels, the Secretariat assured parties that all issues, regardless of the priority level, are included on the agenda. The group then adopted the medium priority level.

BC Strategic: Co-chaired by Ann De Jonghe (Belgium) and Lendita Dika (North Macedonia), the contact group finalized the draft decisions on improving the functioning of the prior informed consent (PIC) procedure and the strategic framework. On the PIC procedure, delegates agreed to remove brackets from a paragraph emphasizing the need for parties, in particular developing countries, countries with economies in transition, and SIDS, to receive support in the implementation of the PIC procedure when implementing the 2026–2029 technical assistance plan.

On the strategic framework draft decision, the contact group agreed to encourage parties and others “to take specific actions to implement the strategic framework through activities under the Convention.” The contact group tasked the Secretariat with, subject to the availability of resources, reporting on progress made using the indicators of the strategic framework. Delegates also agreed to undertake a final evaluation of the strategic framework at COP21, for consideration at COP22.

Financial Resources and Technical Assistance: Co-chaired by Toks Akinseye (the UK) and David Kapindula (Zambia), the contact group reviewed the conference room paper (CRP) on resource mobilization from non-state actors, hoping to build on the consensus achieved in clearing the decision on the SC financial mechanism. Delegates agreed to take note of the compilation report by the Secretariat, and debated extensively how to address

the concerns of a group of parties regarding certain elements of the report. Many explained that “taking note of” the report does not endorse its content, which will be reviewed during intersessional work, but no agreement was reached. Similarly, parties could not agree whether to keep references to SC paragraph 2 Article 13 on mobilizing resources from developed countries, which some argued is not relevant since the document focuses on non-state actors. One group of parties suggested “other sources than State actors” instead of “non-state actors” to clarify the scope of the future strategy. Discussions continued in the evening, when parties aimed to review technical assistance and finalize the CRP.

RC Effectiveness: The contact group, co-chaired by Linroy Christian (Antigua and Barbuda) and Karoliina Anttonen (Finland), began work based on a Co-Chairs text on options for a possible way forward. For each recommendation in the Secretariat's compilation (paragraph 62 of RC/COP.12/INF/18), the Co-Chairs proposed action options for delegates' review. Parking the most contentious issues, namely, establishing an effectiveness committee and revising the listing process, delegates discussed aspects related to information exchange, technology use, and capacity building.

On information exchange and technology use, there was general support for inviting submissions on resources and tools used for implementing best practice chemical management systems, and on the use of existing databases, but many voiced concerns over incorporation of a mobile application into the clearing-house mechanism, calling it premature.

On capacity building for incoming Chemical Review Committee members, delegates considered requesting the Secretariat to look into additional training through online means, and to implement mentoring opportunities, possibly opening this to other stakeholders. Many pointed out ongoing efforts and different capacities of members from developed and developing countries.

On incorporating best practices of pesticide management for listed and proposed-for-listing chemicals into the PIC procedure, many parties highlighted work done by the FAO and recommended engagement with regional and national offices.

RC Compliance: The Secretariat presented the updated Work Programme of the Compliance Committee based on the submission by the EU (CRP.6), which proposed two additional activities for the Committee: to identify and review issues being faced by parties in relation to implementation of the labelling requirements and the submission of the Safety Data Sheets, and to identify and review issues being faced relating to the availability of information on chemical handling, accident management, and safer alternatives. After one party pointed out the already busy Work Programme, and another suggested the activities are better suited for the work programme on technical assistance, the proposal was withdrawn. Agreeing to a minor editorial change, delegates cleared the text.

In the Corridors

As the RC listed fenthion, a chemical that has been on the COP agenda for 10 years, many delegates wondered what prompted a change of heart. Is it actually “dead,” and no production or use is happening, hence no interests are affected? The listing was previously opposed by very few countries who cited food security concerns over a lack of alternatives to control the ravenous quelea quelea, a pest bird common in Africa. A seasoned observer pointed out that fenthion is still produced and used, and wondered if capacity building and technical support from the Secretariat, such as the BRS Secretariat's recent webinar on alternative control methods, prompted the shift.

Heading into the final days, delegates seem to have broken through several roadblocks. Many BC items are close to completion; only the compliance decision remains particularly difficult. The SC Listings group had productive discussions, but there were worries about the decisions coming to plenary on Thursday given the delicate balance achieved in the texts. One observer thought the RC had “done better than feared,” and said it's heartening to see that “the collapse of the Convention is not assured: even old pesticides can be listed.”

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