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## NOTE

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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	AOB for the meeting of the Council (Environment) on 17 June 2025 Outcome of the Triple Conference of the Parties to the Basel (COP 17), Rotterdam (COP 12) and Stockholm (COP 12) Conventions (Geneva, Switzerland, 28 April - 9 May 2025) - Information from the Presidency and the Commission

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## Introduction and Overview

The Conferences of the Parties (COPs) of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade, and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants were held back-to-back for the seventh time from 28 April to 9 May 2025.

The theme of the three COPs was “Make visible the invisible: Strengthened Action on Chemicals and Wastes”. More than 2000 participants attended the conference, including observers from non-Parties, NGOs and BRS regional centres. The COPs adopted 20 decisions under the Basel, 7 decisions under the Rotterdam and 21 decisions under the Stockholm Convention, and in addition, 8 decisions that were jointly adopted by the three Conventions, all aimed to strengthen the protection of human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals and wastes.

The three legally autonomous Multilateral Environmental Agreements convened the joint meeting of the COPs to strengthen cooperation and coordination between the Conventions, intending to enhance policy coherence and the effectiveness of their activities on the ground. Each of the Conventions' COP also convened individually over the two weeks to deal with its specific topics of the global chemicals and waste agenda.

Panama offered to host the next meetings of the COPs, which will take place in April 2027.

## **Individual Conventions**

### **Basel Convention**

The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal regulates the export and import of hazardous waste and certain other waste (household waste, residues arising from the incineration of household waste and plastics difficult to recycle). The Basel Convention was adopted in 1989 and entered into force in 1992. It currently has 191 Parties. The European Union and all Member States of the European Union are Parties to it.

The most prominent decision adopted at COP17 of the Basel Convention is the decision to amend Annex IV of the Convention, listing the waste management operations. This concludes almost a decade of work, and although the amendment is a rather minimal review, this constitutes a modernisation of the Annex that should provide further legal clarity. This amendment will apply from 2030 and will need to be reflected in EU legislation. With this amendment adopted, Parties can focus on the complex review of Annexes I and III (hazardous waste characterization) in the coming biennium.

The COP decided to include the sustainability of global trade in textile waste into the work programme of the Convention. This is the first time that textile sustainability has been brought up into the scope of an international environmental instrument. Also, in line with the EU's ambition to strengthen implementation of the Convention, a decision was adopted to give the Implementation and Compliance Committee a mandate to adopt stronger measures towards countries in persistent non-compliance.

The COP adopted four technical guidelines on the environmentally sound management of waste containing persistent organic pollutants and adopted a renewed strategic framework for the Basel Convention for the period 2025-2031.

The COP also agreed to work to ensure a harmonised identification of e-waste, as well as to look into the impact of the rules on the export of plastic waste agreed in 2019. Further work will also continue on the sound management of waste batteries and used tyres, waste containing persistent organic pollutants, as well as on improving the functioning of the “prior informed consent procedure”.

## **Rotterdam Convention**

The Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade provides certain rules for international trade in hazardous chemicals listed in Annex III to the Convention. The Convention was adopted in 1998 and entered into force in 2004. It currently has 167 Parties. The European Union and all its Member States are Parties to it. The Rotterdam Convention does not ban or restrict trade in chemicals or pesticide formulations but serves to strengthen the protection of human health and the environment by ensuring informed decision-making on the import of chemicals listed in Annex III and by exchanging safety information between exporting and importing Parties.

The 12<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties (COP 12) adopted the listing of carbosulfan and of severely hazardous pesticide formulations containing fenthion in Annex III, submitting them to the Prior Informed Consent procedure and information exchange between Parties.

Unfortunately, the COP was unable to reach consensus on the listing of the other eight chemicals recommended for inclusion in Annex III, some of which had already been considered at several past COPs. These chemicals are 5 pesticides (acetochlor, chlorpyrifos, iprodione, methyl bromide and paraquat), 1 severely hazardous pesticide formulation containing paraquat, and two industrial chemicals (chrysotile asbestos and mercury). For the pesticides, a few Parties that use them in agriculture remain concerned about the potential negative impacts of listing on the costs and availability for their farmers, and thus on food security. These and other arguments put forward by opposing Parties, such as the lack of effective alternatives and the blacklisting of listed chemicals by private certification schemes for agricultural products, are beyond the criteria and scope of the Convention.

Regarding chrysotile asbestos, some Parties (Russian Federation, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, India, Zimbabwe) disputed that the criteria for listing are met by referring to the lack of scientific evidence concerning health effects and to the economic importance, which is not in line with the criteria under the Convention.

One of the Parties (Brazil) that claim that blacklisting of listed pesticides by private certification schemes for agricultural products is the main reason why their farmers would have problems due to unavailability of alternatives and high costs proposed action by the Conference of the Parties, including the creation of a new subsidiary body that would address the effectiveness of the Convention by amongst others supervising the work of the Chemical Review Committee. That proposal was rejected by the vast majority of Parties and a decision on the effectiveness of the Convention was adopted that aims at improving the exchange of information on the functioning of the Rotterdam Convention and at offering additional training to members of the Chemical Review Committee.

The COP adopted the work programme of the Compliance Committee for the biennium 2026-2027, tasking the committee to among other things review systemic issues of general compliance, to undertake further work to identify challenges faced by exporting parties, and to make recommendations to COP 13.

### **Stockholm Convention**

The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) currently regulates 37 chemicals that are toxic, persistent, travel long distances and bio-accumulate in organisms. The Convention was adopted in 2001 and entered into force in 2004. It currently has 186 Parties. The European Union and all its Member States are Parties to it.

The 12<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of the Parties (COP 12) successfully adopted the listing of the pesticide chlorpyrifos, of medium chain chlorinated paraffins (MCCPs) that are used as lubricants and coolants in metal processing, as additives in plastics and in polyvinyl chloride (PVC) products, paints, sealants and rubber, and of long-chain perfluorocarboxylic acids (LC-PFCAs) which are used in semiconductor manufacturing, printing inks, paints and coatings, paper and food packaging, waterproof textiles, cleaning products and firefighting foams, in Annex A (elimination) of the Convention. All three chemicals were listed with the exemptions proposed by the POPs Review Committee of the Convention, and, for MCCPs and chlorpyrifos, with additional exemptions requested at COP 12 by Parties.

COP 12 amended the existing entry of UV-328 in Annex A by adding time-limited specific exemption for the use in aerospace and defence, which is also needed by the EU. This was the first time that an existing entry has been amended based on a proposal by a Party, and many Parties expressed concerns since this was done without consulting the scientific body under the Convention that is tasked to evaluate such requests when reviewing proposals for listing.

For the first time under the Stockholm Convention, an extension of an existing exemption was adopted to allow the Republic of Korea to continue for 4 years the use of existing stocks of the hazardous chemicals PFOA and PFOS, both belonging to the PFAS family. Some concerns were expressed, but Parties also highly appreciated the transparency exercised by Korea when requesting this extension.

The work under the newly established compliance mechanism was launched by electing the members of the compliance committee and by establishing the programme of work of the committee for the biennium 2026-2027.

A number of important decisions to advance the work towards elimination of listed POPs were adopted, such as on the work plan for further development of the Best Available Techniques (BAT) and Best Environment Practices (BEP) to reduce or eliminate releases from unintentional production, on the work to eliminate polychlorinated biphenyls and on the measures to reduce or eliminate releases from wastes. Decisions were also adopted on the management of existing exemptions, reporting obligations, national implementation plans and for effectiveness evaluation of the Convention, including the global monitoring plan.

## **Budget and Technical Assistance and Financial Resources**

The Parties adopted the work programmes and budgets of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions for 2026-2027. The Parties agreed on a global budget including an overall increase of 4.12 % compared to 2024-2025, for a total of USD 32,529,145 (Basel Convention: increase of 4.12 % with a total of USD 10,621,477; Rotterdam Convention: increase of 4.12 % with a total of USD 8,959,842; Stockholm Convention: increase of 4.12 % with a total of USD 12,947,825).

The EU and its Member States are the main donors supporting the implementation of the conventions, including assistance to developing country Parties. For the next COP, the Secretariat will prepare a report on the technical assistance needs of developing-country Parties. A decision to strengthen the work of the regional centres of the Basel and Stockholm Conventions was also adopted.

Regarding the Financial Mechanism for the Stockholm Convention, the COP decided on guidance for the Global Environment Facility to support the Convention. Furthermore, a proposal from the African group for a resource mobilization strategy from non-State actors was adopted with some amendments, covering Africa, South America and the Caribbean.

## **Governance and Synergies Issues**

The COPs emphasized the importance of cooperation with the Minamata Convention, the Global Framework on Chemicals and other multilateral environmental agreements and relevant organisations such as the World Health Organisation. The mandate to the Secretariat to contribute to the negotiations on the future plastics treaty and on the upcoming science-policy panel on chemicals, waste and pollution prevention was confirmed.

Finally, the COPs adopted several decisions to enhance cooperation among the three conventions, such as on synergies in preventing illegal trade and traffic, science to action, the joint clearing house mechanism for information exchange, and to strengthen the role of the regional centres in providing technical assistance for capacity-building and technology transfer.

## Organisational matters

Due to a blockage by the Russian Federation and Belarus, the Central and Eastern European region was not in a position to nominate candidates for election as officers or members of subsidiary bodies. As there was no option to vote in the regional group, the matter was referred to the Plenary. The blockage tactics of the Russian Federation and Belarus paralysed the meeting for multiple hours and, in the absence of a quorum, the COPs were in the end only able to acknowledge that the region did not manage to agree on any candidates and therefore no candidates from this region were elected as officers or members of subsidiary bodies. This failure to agree on candidates affects, in total, 16 vacant positions under the three conventions.

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