



ROTTERDAM CONVENTION

SECRETARIAT FOR THE ROTTERDAM CONVENTION
ON THE PRIOR INFORMED CONSENT PROCEDURE
FOR CERTAIN HAZARDOUS CHEMICALS AND PESTICIDES
IN INTERNATIONAL TRADE



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Geneva, 31 January 2008

Request for opinion and views on the option paper in particular on Building Block 3 as well as on the broader transformation of the UN Environmental system

Dear Sirs,

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the draft options paper sent to the Secretariat on 20 December 2007. We would like to compliment you on undertaking this review of the institutional framework for the UN environmental activities. A key challenge is the very broad area covered and the range of activities and agreements that are to be considered.

The proposal to group the various Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs) into substantive clusters is a good first step which should help to identify areas where collaboration might be improved. The process has been initiated for chemicals through a consideration of the Rotterdam, Basel and Stockholm Conventions as a hazardous substances/chemicals cluster. It may be useful at some point to also consider the Montreal Protocol on Ozone Depleting Substances in such a cluster. From the perspective of the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, a number of the points listed in the section entitled Building Block 3 aimed at enhancing cooperation and coordination amongst MEAs, including promoting working in clusters and rationalising secretariat activities - are already in place in the area of chemicals through the ongoing synergies exercise - this may provide a model for other clusters to follow. Please find enclosed with this letter some specific points to consider with respect to the Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention Secretariats in response to the elements listed in Building Blocks 3, 4 and 6.

It is clear that in view of the range of agreements and issues to be considered in improving international environmental governance it is not a matter of "one size fits all", it will be important that in moving forward the parts that are working well are not lost. In that sense the process should be guided by the principle that form follows function so that changes to Secretariats structure and organization reflect

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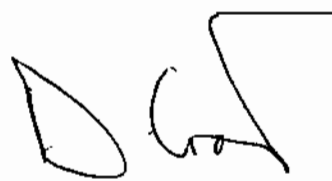
what is needed to better meet the needs of countries in implementing the Conventions. In this regard, it will also be important to avoid as far as possible the micromanagement of the work of the Secretariats, they should be given an opportunity to address how to best implement recommendations, for example it may be that posts may be shared with out establishing joint units.

An additional consideration is the importance of highlighting the value and role of the chemicals cluster under the UN Development Assistance Framework (UN-DAF), as a key contributing element to the environmental portfolio at the national level.

We hope that these comments are of use to you in finalizing your challenging, but important task.


Peter E. Kenmore
Co-Executive Secretary

Yours sincerely,


Donald Cooper
Co-Executive Secretary

ANNEX

Specific points to consider with respect to the Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention Secretariats in response to the elements listed in Building Blocks 3, 4 and 6

The Rotterdam Convention has evolved from a joint programme of work between FAO and UNEP initiated in 1992. In follow-up to UNCED in 1992, Governments engaged in a negotiating process that resulted in the text of the Convention adopted in Rotterdam in 1998. Article 19 on the Secretariat recognized the joint programme's cooperation in having the Director General of FAO and the Executive Director of UNEP to continue to perform jointly the Secretariat services for the Convention. The first meeting of the Conference of the Parties in October 2004 further recognized this collaboration in deciding to maintain the secretariat in FAO and UNEP.

The joint Secretariat builds on the technical expertise resident in each organization with FAO taking lead on pesticides and UNEP other types of chemicals. FAO continues to provide direct financial assistance and in-kind support for the operation of the Secretariat and working with countries for the implementation of the Convention. The Secretariat benefits from access to legal and administrative support (including financial and Information Technology) within the two organisations. The work on the Rotterdam Convention has also become increasingly integrated with the programme of work on pesticides management within FAO.

The Rotterdam Convention has adopted a programme for the national and regional delivery of technical assistance to Parties. The delivery of this programme of work has benefited from the links of the Secretariat to regional and sub-regional offices of FAO and regional offices of UNEP. For example, the technical staff (Plant protection and Plant production officers) in the eight regional and sub-regional offices, have integrated the Convention with their regular programme of work with countries.

On an ongoing basis the Secretariat has identified other partners that might collaborate in the delivery of technical assistance. These include the various regional centers established under the Stockholm Convention, the Basel Convention, regional offices of UNEP and the WHO as well as other regional and subregional organizations working on chemicals.

In the case of the Rotterdam Convention the budget is based on two trust funds, one for assessed contributions that is used for core secretariat costs and one voluntary trust fund that is used for technical assistance activities and travel of participant to meetings of the Conference of the Parties. It does not immediately follow that reduced expenditures with respect to Core Secretariat costs would result in more funds being available for implementation activities.

The Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention may be seen as an example of cooperation, not only among UN organizations as the secretariat is jointly provided by UNEP and FAO, but also between the secretariats of Conventions as there is within UNEP a single executive secretary for both the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions.

The fact that the Executive Secretary of the Stockholm Convention also has responsibility for the UNEP part of the Rotterdam Convention Secretariat has further facilitated collaborative activities or shared services between the Secretariats. The common and administrative services of each Secretariat are currently provided jointly and this activity will expand to accommodate greater efficiency of operation where it benefits the Parties of each Convention. Similarly co-location of the Secretariats for the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions in the same building in Geneva should also facilitate closer cooperation.

A further observation in working with Governments on the implementation of the Rotterdam Convention is that the responsibility for managing chemicals is most often divided among different ministries. In many countries, Ministries of Agriculture are responsible for the regulation and control of pesticides while, where such regulatory oversight exists for industrial chemicals, responsibilities are with Ministries of Environment. A common challenge to working with Governments is the lack of inter-ministerial communication or cooperation. The link with FAO to Ministries of Agriculture has greatly facilitated integration of the work on the Rotterdam Convention with the national activities on chemicals management.

Finally, note should be taken of the process already initiated by the Conference of the Parties of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions on how the cooperation and synergies between the secretariats of these three conventions could be improved to ensure maximum coherence, efficiency and effectiveness in the field of chemicals and wastes. Currently, an ad hoc joint working group on enhancing cooperation and coordination among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, comprising 15 representatives for each convention, has been mandated to prepare joint recommendations on enhanced cooperation and coordination among the three conventions. The third and final meeting of the ad hoc joint working group is scheduled to meet 25 to 28 March 2008 in Rome. The results of their work will be submitted to the Conferences of the Parties of all three conventions for consideration in June 2008, October 2008 and May 2009, respectively. The outcome of this process should provide additional input to the General Assembly's discussions.