



From Science to Action under the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions

“From Science to Action” – Why is it important?

The resolution adopted at the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-5) held in March 2022 to establish a **science-policy panel (SPP)** to support action on chemicals, waste and pollution (UNEP/EA.5/Res.8) reflects global concerns about the impact of pollution on human health and the environment. These concerns are shared by the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) conventions, which share the common objective of protecting human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals and waste.

Chemical pollution and waste generation are increasing at exponential rates, with an estimated 350,000 synthetic chemicals currently registered for production and use around the world (Wang et al. 2020). The individual and collective impact of pollution related to these chemicals, many of which persist in the environment for many years, is significant and yet frequently less publicly salient than other major environmental challenges, including climate change and biodiversity loss.

One recent analysis indicates that growth in “synthetic chemical production and diversification, particularly within the developing world, outpaced these other agents of global change” (Bernhardt et al. 2017). Another set of experts warns that “anthropogenic chemical pollution has the potential to pose one of the largest environmental threats to humanity” (Naidu et al. 2021).

UNEP has also acknowledged the urgency of addressing pollution, characterizing the interconnected threats posed by

pollution and waste, nature and biodiversity loss, and climate change as a “triple planetary crisis” driven by unsustainable consumption and production.

The BRS conventions are three of the primary multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) for coordinated global action to address the impacts of chemical and waste pollution on human health and the environment. Each of these legally binding treaties is designed to address a different facet of the production, use and disposal of chemicals of global concern, with the aim of protecting human health and the environment from the impacts of exposure to chemical and waste pollution.

Science is a core component of each of these multilateral environmental agreements, informing technical experts’, policymakers’ and other stakeholders’ evaluation of problems, formulation of recommendations and policy responses, and supporting implementation by Parties and other stakeholders at the regional and national levels.

The BRS conventions have been working at the interface of science and policy since their establishment, meeting new challenges and emerging trends in their respective areas of responsibility for management of chemicals and waste.

Each of these conventions is structured to ensure that science plays a significant role in policymaking; as such, stakeholders can draw lessons from the successes and challenges that Parties, technical experts, and diverse stakeholders have dealt with as they have worked to fulfill the objectives of each of these conventions.



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