



# SPREP

Secretariat of the Pacific Regional  
Environment Programme

## WAIGANI CONVENTION

### What is the Waigani Convention?

The Convention to ban the Importation of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes into Forum Island Countries and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Waste within the South Pacific Region opened for signature in Waigani, Papua New Guinea in 1995 and entered into force in 2001. SPREP serves as the Convention's Secretariat, while the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat serves as Depositary.

### Who are its Parties?

The Convention is open to all Pacific Island Forum countries. As of October 2012, there are 13 Parties: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu.

### What are the purposes of the Convention?

- To reduce or eliminate transboundary movements of hazardous and radioactive waste into and within the Pacific region;
- To minimize the production of hazardous and toxic wastes in the Pacific region;
- To ensure that disposal of wastes is completed in an environmentally sound manner and as close to the source as possible; and
- To assist Pacific island countries that are Parties to the Convention in the environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes they generate.

Asbestos stockpile, Niue (E. Richards)



### What substances are covered by the Convention?

The Convention covers toxic, poisonous, explosive, corrosive, flammable, ecotoxic, infectious and radioactive wastes.

### What are the general obligations on countries?

Countries should ban the importation of hazardous and radioactive wastes. They should wherever possible, minimize the production of hazardous waste and cooperate to ensure that wastes are treated and disposed of in an environmentally sound manner.

Waste oil drums, Tuvalu (D. Haynes)

### What are the economic and social benefits of the Convention?

There are many reasons why the Waigani Convention is important for the region:

- It provides an effective protective mechanism to stop waste traders from making the Pacific an international waste dump.
- It will prevent ships from using the Pacific as a highway for hazardous waste.
- It will create a regional mechanism to facilitate the cleanup of hazardous and radioactive wastes in the region.

The major benefit of the Convention is the establishment of a system to prevent hazardous and radioactive waste entering or being dumped in the region. A significant but less tangible direct benefit is the reduced risk from a hazardous or nuclear waste disaster. Parties are able to feel more secure in the knowledge that the risk of a shipping disaster is far less likely.

## How does the Waigani Convention fit into the international hazardous waste control regime?

The Waigani Convention is very similar to the Basel Convention, which serves as the primary international instrument governing the transboundary movement and the environmental management of hazardous wastes.



The major difference lies in the fact that the Waigani is administered within the Pacific region. This means that Pacific Island countries have a significant say in how the Convention will evolve. The Waigani Convention is also different to the Basel Convention in that it covers radioactive wastes and extends to the Economic Exclusion Zone (200 nautical miles) rather than the territorial sea (12 nautical miles) under Basel.

## What are the costs associated with the Convention?

Parties to the Convention pay a nominal administrative fee every two years to the Secretariat based on an agreed formula.

## What personnel will be required to administer the Convention?

The Convention requires that each Party identifies a Competent Authority and Focal Point. The amount of staff time required to administer the Convention will depend on the volume of waste being held or transported. As a minimum, a country may need to allocate some time to customs officials, a Focal Point and possibly a scientist/engineer. SPREP may be able to assist in some of the functions required.



## Is national legislation required?

Yes. The legislation is similar in format to legislation required to administer the Basel Convention. The Basel Convention Secretariat has produced model legislation that is useful for the purposes of the Waigani Convention.

## What are the reporting requirements?

The Convention describes various forms of information that should be transmitted between countries and to the Secretariat. These include: export notifications; written consent or disapproval for import applications; movement documentation; accident notification; and information on the sound management of wastes.

POPs soil sampling (D. Haynes)

## Is help available to administer the Convention?

SPREP, as the Secretariat of the Waigani Convention, undertakes training throughout the region. This helps Pacific Island countries develop the capacity to manage their wastes in an environmentally sound manner.

## What is the Status of the Convention?

The Convention entered into force in 2001. The Conference of the Parties (COP) meets biennially.



For more information, contact: Waste Management and Pollution Control Division, Secretariat of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP), [sprep@sprep.org](mailto:sprep@sprep.org)

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