

## 31<sup>st</sup> SPREP MEETING OF OFFICIALS

5, 6, and 7 September 2023, Apia, Samoa

### **Agenda item 8.3: Report on outcomes of BRS COPs and Preparations for Minamata COP**

#### **Purpose of paper:**

1. To report on the outcomes of the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention (BC-COP 16), 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention (RC-COP 11), 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention (SC-COP 11) commonly known as the BRS COPs.
2. Provide an update on preparations for the upcoming Fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury.

#### **Background:**

3. Preparations for the 2023 BRS COPs began in March 2023 at the Asia-Pacific regional preparatory meeting held in Bangkok, Thailand where the BRS Secretariat took delegates through the entire agenda of the COPs as well as administrative announcements. A representative from Australia was also invited to present a proposal to amend the Rotterdam Convention to Asia-Pacific Parties. Pacific island Parties to BRS attended the preparatory meeting included Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.
4. SPREP organised a briefing session on the 25 April 2023 to further prepare Pacific Parties for the BRS COPs. The briefing was well attended by all Pacific Island countries and Australia and New Zealand. The main objective of the briefing was to confirm national and regional priorities and positions as well as agree on coordination arrangements during the COPs for communication and technical support.
5. The 2023 BRS COPs were held in Geneva, Switzerland from 1-12 May. A total of twenty-one delegates from the Pacific attended the COPs, nine (9) Pacific island countries Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Papua New Guinea, Republic of Marshall Islands, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. SPREP provided technical support in partnership with Australia and New Zealand.

#### **Outcomes of the COPs**

##### **Basel Convention**

6. BC-COP 16 adopted technical guidelines for the environmentally sound management of plastic waste, which reflect the first global understanding of how to minimize the generation of plastic wastes and to ensure that their collection, transport, and disposal minimize negative impacts on human health and the environment.

7. The COP also adopted technical guidelines on wastes containing or contaminated with persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and on the environmentally sound management of 'waste' lead-acid batteries.
8. The Technical Guidelines are meant to provide guidance to countries in building their capacity to manage waste in an environmentally and efficient way and development of detailed procedures, waste management plans and/or strategies.

### **Stockholm Convention**

9. The Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention took the decision to eliminate the use of three POPs, namely the pesticide methoxychlor and the industrial chemicals Dechlorane Plus and UV-328, by listing these chemicals in Annex A to the Convention. Methoxychlor has been used as a replacement for DDT against a wide range of pests including biting flies, houseflies, mosquito larvae, cockroaches and chiggers on field crops, fruit, vegetables, ornamentals as well as on livestock and pets. Dechlorane Plus is a flame retardant and UV-328 a UV absorbent, both chemicals are heavily used as plastic additives, such as for motor vehicles, industrial machines and in medical devices.
10. Governments also adopted the monitoring results that indicate that regulations targeting POPs have succeeded in reducing levels of POPs in humans and the environment. For the initial 12 POPs, concentrations measured in air and in human populations have declined and continue to decline or remain at low levels due to restrictions on POPs; and for the newly listed POPs, concentrations start showing decreasing levels.
11. The COP also requested the POPs Review Committee, the scientific body under the Convention, to make recommendations regarding options for identifying POPs in stockpiles, products and materials in use and waste stockpiles.
12. The report on the second effectiveness evaluation of the Stockholm Convention was launched. It highlights that the Convention provides an effective and dynamic framework for regulating POPs throughout their life cycle, addressing the production, use, import, export, release, and disposal of these chemicals worldwide, and that progress has occurred since the first evaluation in 2017.
13. With the adoption of procedures and mechanisms on compliance, the COP has finally put in place the last institution required under the Stockholm Convention. The procedures and mechanisms, which will be operated by a Compliance Committee, will help Parties in fulfilling their obligations under the Convention by both examining systemic issues of interest and challenges faced by all Parties.

### **Rotterdam Convention**

14. The eleventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention agreed to the listing of the pesticide terbufos for which an extremely high hazard to terrestrial organisms had been identified. This listing will make terbufos subject to the Prior Informed Consent procedure, thereby granting Parties to the Convention the right to decide on its future import.
15. The Rotterdam Convention only listed one of the seven chemicals recommended by its scientific subsidiary body. Considering this long-running inability to list chemicals, there were extensive discussions on the effectiveness of the Convention. Parties agreed to establish an intersessional process to gather

information from parties on their challenges regarding listing decisions, including potential direct and indirect effects of listing. Delegations considered a proposal to add a new Annex to the Convention that would list chemicals on which parties could not reach consensus. For those who ratified the new Annex, the listed chemicals would be subject to the Convention's prior informed consent (PIC) procedure. After a vote, the proposal failed to garner the 3/4 majority required to amend the Convention by a slim margin.

#### **Update on Minamata Convention COP 5**

16. The fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury (COP-5) will be held from 30 October 2023 to 3 November 2023 at Geneva, Switzerland.
17. A preparatory meeting for the Minamata Convention Parties in the Asia Pacific region has been planned for 5-6 September 2023 in Bangkok, Thailand.
18. SPREP will convene a regional briefing for the Pacific on 12 October 2023 to further prepare Parties for COP-5 and provide on the ground support to Pacific Parties at COP-5 in Geneva through the Waste Management and Pollution Control programme team.

#### **Next steps**

19. Overall, SPREP as the Pacific Regional Centre for the Joint Implementation of the Basel Convention and Waigani Conventions continues to provide technical support and training on the BRS and Minamata Conventions. SPREP continues to seek funding opportunities from UNEP and GEF as funding mechanisms for the BRS and Minamata Conventions to support members in implementing the outcomes of the COPs and thereby meeting their obligations to these MEAs.

#### **Recommendation:**

20. The Meeting is invited to:
    - 1) **Note** the outcomes of the 16<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention, 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention, and 11<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention;
    - 2) **Encourage** Parties to undertake necessary national actions to implement the outcomes of the BRS COPs; and
    - 3) **Note** preparations toward the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Minamata Convention on Mercury.
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13 June 2023