

31st SPREP MEETING OF OFFICIALS

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

Agenda item 9.3.4: Environmental sound management of chemicals and hazardous wastes

Purpose of paper:

1. To seek support and endorsement of the Meeting to:
 - (i) develop strategic regional resources for the environmentally sound management of chemicals and hazardous wastes;
 - (ii) endorse the adoption of the technical guidelines developed by the Basel Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention (BRS) on ESM of hazardous waste; and
 - (iii) encourage project focal points to actively engage in project activities and fully utilise resourced developed.

Background:

2. Chemicals are pervasive. While they are used in most industries and provide essential benefits to everyday lives, they can also threaten human health and Pacific ecosystems upon which our communities depend. But with chemicals found in everything from food to detergents and children's toys, exposure is unavoidable.
3. Hazardous wastes and chemicals can cause acute poisoning and long-term effects on humans such as cancers, neurological disorders and congenital disabilities. In 2019, at least 2 million people died due to exposure to a small number of hazardous chemicals, while 900,000 people globally die from lead exposure each year. We do not know what these figures are for the Pacific however the Secretariat will work with the United Nations to address this gap in the Pacific.
4. Harmful chemicals can also trigger the eutrophication of water bodies, ozone depletion, and threaten sensitive ecosystems and biodiversity. As the third-largest industrial emitter of carbon dioxide, the chemical industry is a major driver of the climate crisis, particularly through energy and material-related emissions.
5. The sound management of chemicals and waste is therefore critical to reducing their adverse impacts on the health of Pacific people and our environment.
6. SPREP's Waste Management and Pollution Control Programme (WMPC) has received funding support from the Global Environment Facility (GEF) ISLANDS Pacific Child Project (ISLANDS) to strengthen the capacity of SPREP Member countries to address some of their hazardous wastes and chemicals challenges.

7. The support received from GEF has been used to undertake assessments of the state of management of highly hazardous chemicals namely mercury and persistent organic pollutants under the Minamata and Stockholm conventions in several SPREP member countries including: Cook Islands, Fiji, Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Niue, Palau, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu.
8. National plans have been developed by the above beneficiary PICs on how they intend to address persistent organic pollutants and mercury containing products present in their countries.
9. These national activities now provide much needed information on the state of hazardous wastes and chemicals management in the Pacific. SPREP intends to use data generated by these activities to develop strategic regional resources to further support countries.
10. The following strategic regional hazardous waste and chemicals management resources are earmarked for development in 2023 and 2024:
 - a. Pacific Regional Outlook on Hazardous Waste and Chemicals;
 - b. Regional Action Plan on Mercury;
 - c. Regional Codes of Practice on Hazardous Wastes; and
 - d. Adoption of Basel Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention (BRS) Technical Guidelines on Environmentally Sound Management (ESM) of Hazardous Wastes. These guidelines include:
 - i. E-waste
 - ii. Persistent organic pollutants (POPs)
 - iii. Plastic wastes
 - iv. Waste batteries
 - v. Mercury wastes

Copies of the guidelines can be found in the attached [BC Technical Guidelines](#)

11. Additionally, the European Union funded PacWastePlus Programme is providing continued support to the management of hazardous wastes including asbestos containing materials, healthcare waste, and e-waste.
12. PacWastePlus has developed regional resources and is providing targeted project support on these as follow:
 - a. Asbestos Management
 - i. Development of regional resources to support development of Asbestos Containing Material importation bans (provided to all countries, but actively assisting Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, and Tonga to implement)
 - ii. Development of Model Importation Ban language (provided to all countries)
 - iii. Development of Model Asbestos Containing Materials Management Policy (provided to all countries)
 - iv. Development of Model Asbestos Management Code of Practice (provided to all countries, but actively assisting Kiribati, Nauru, Papua New Guinea, and Tonga to implement)
 - v. Undertaking asbestos abatement activities in Kiribati, Nauru, Niue, and Tonga

- b. Healthcare Waste Management
 - i. Development of Healthcare Waste Management Training (to be provided directly to Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea initially and work being undertaken at present to determine how to deliver across the region)
 - ii. Development of a National Healthcare Waste Management Strategy (to be provided directly to Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea initially and released as a Model Policy for implementation by other countries)
 - iii. Development of a Hospital Management Plan (to be provided directly to Timor-Leste and Papua New Guinea initially and released as a Model Plan for implementation by other countries)

- c. E-waste Management
 - i. Development of an e-waste take back system for Niue and Samoa, including development of sustainable financing legislation / regulation to support the system
 - ii. Development, in partnership with ISLANDS, of an e-waste receipt and processing facility in Samoa to accept and manage e-waste

Recommendation:

13. The Meeting is invited to:

- 1) **Endorse** the development of the:
 - i. Pacific Regional Outlook on Hazardous Waste and Chemicals;
 - ii. Regional Action Plan on Mercury;
 - iii. Regional Codes of Practice on Hazardous Wastes.
- 2) **Endorse** the adoption of technical guidelines developed by the Basel Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention (BRS) on ESM of hazardous waste; and
- 3) **Encourage** project focal points to actively engage in project activities, and utilise the resources developed to improve hazardous waste management nationally.

13 March 2023