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**Rotterdam Convention on the Prior  
Informed Consent Procedure for Certain  
Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in  
International Trade  
Conference of the Parties  
Fourth meeting  
Rome, 27–31 October 2008  
Item 11 of the provisional agenda\*  
High-level segment**

## **Information on the high-level segment**

### **Note by the Secretariat**

1. The high-level segment, scheduled for Thursday and Friday, 30 and 31 October, will focus on the theme: “Sound chemicals management: relieving the burden on public health”. A series of related side events and panel discussions are planned for Thursday afternoon.
2. The present note contains additional information on the high-level segment:
  - (a) Proposed annotated agenda;
  - (b) Information on the panel discussions planned for Thursday, 30 October, from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. (appendix I);
  - (c) Information on the meeting on support for the programme of work planned for Friday, 31 October, from 2.30 p.m. to 3.30 p.m. (appendix II).

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\* UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.4/1.

**High-level segment of the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties**  
**“Sound chemicals management: relieving the burden of public health”**  
**30 and 31 October 2008**  
**FAO Headquarters in Rome**

**Annotated agenda**

**Thursday 30 October 2008**

**Morning session**

**Plenary**

**09:30 Briefing for ministers**

Briefing for ministers by a representative of UNEP, a representative of FAO, the President of the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties and the co-executive secretaries of the Rotterdam Convention.

**10:00 Opening of the high level segment**

Opening and welcoming statements will be made by:

- Ms. Andrea Repetti, Conference President
- Mr. Peter Kenmore, co-Executive Secretary (FAO)
- Mr. James G. Butler, Deputy Director-General of FAO
- Mr. Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP

**10:30 Statement by WHO representative**

A statement on the theme for the high-level segment will be made by Ms. Maria Neira, Director of the Department of Public Health and Environment, World Health Organization (WHO).

**10:45 Floor opened for statements by ministers**

The Conference President will open the floor for statements.

**12:45 Introduction to panel discussions**

Introduction of the ministerial panel discussions scheduled for the afternoon session, by Mr. Donald Cooper, co-Executive Secretary (UNEP).

**13:00 Closure of morning session**

The Conference President will invite the ministers for a photo shoot and announce the side events which take place during the lunch break.

**13:00–15:00 Lunch break**

**13:15 Ministerial photo**

A ministerial photo will be taken at FAO premises.

**13:30–14:30 Side event on severely hazardous pesticide formulations (United Republic of Tanzania)**

A minister from the United Republic of Tanzania will open a side event on severely hazardous pesticide formulations, which will highlight the experience of that country (in English).

**13:30–14:30 Side event on the Sahelian Pesticides Committee (SPC)**

A minister from Mali will open a side event on the Sahelian Pesticides Committee (SPC), which will highlight the Committee's efforts to integrate the work on the Rotterdam Convention with their activities (in French).

**Afternoon session****15:00–18:00 Plenary and ministerial panel discussions**

While plenary continues with the delivery of statements, ministers and vice-ministers (or their equivalent) will participate in panel discussions focusing on the theme of the high level segment: “Sound chemicals management: relieving the burden on public health”. These panels will take place in separate rooms and run in parallel. Key messages emerging from the discussions will be presented during the morning session on Friday, 31 October. Contact groups meetings are also envisaged during the afternoon session (for more details on the panel discussions, see appendix I).

**19:00 Working dinner for ministers**

A working dinner for ministers will be organized at FAO Headquarters. During the dinner, a brief presentation summarizing key messages emerging from the panel discussions will be made.

**Friday 31 October 2008****Morning session****Plenary****09:30 Briefing for ministers**

Briefing for ministers by a representative of UNEP, a representative of FAO, the Conference President and the co-executive secretaries of the Rotterdam Convention.

**10:00 Summary of panel discussions**

A summary of the panel discussions reflecting key messages emerging from the discussions will be presented.

**10:30 Adoption of decisions coming forward**

Participants will consider decisions that are brought forward for adoption.

**11:00 Floor opened for statements by ministers**

The Conference President will open the floor for statements.

**13:00 Closure of morning session**

The Conference President will close the morning session.

**13:00–15:00 Lunch break****13:15–14:15 Side event on severely hazardous pesticide formulations**

A minister from Ecuador will open a side event on severely hazardous pesticide formulations, presenting efforts by Ecuador to collect information on pesticide poisoning incidents involving cooperation between the ministries of health, agriculture and environment and other stakeholders (in Spanish).

**13:15–14:15 Side event on industrial chemicals**

The side event on industrial chemicals will introduce some of the key issues associated with the infrastructure required to safely manage industrial chemicals in developing countries and countries with economies in transition, focusing on the legal, regulatory and administrative infrastructural framework required to support national multisectoral industrial chemicals management programmes. The event will also introduce the proposed work programme for the Secretariat for the upcoming biennium on this issue (in English).

**14:30–15:30 Meeting on support for the programme of work**

The objective of this meeting is to provide heads of government delegations and representatives from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations with an opportunity to express their interest and possible support for the programme of work of the Convention for the upcoming biennium, as contained in document UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.4/23 (see <http://www.pic.int>), either as possible recipients or as possible providers of support to specific areas of work.

The implementation of the proposed programme of work is dependent on the availability of resources under the Convention’s Voluntary Special Trust Fund. Expressions of interest will provide strategic guidance to the Secretariat in the planning of activities for the biennium (*for more details on this meeting, see appendix II*).

**Friday 31 October**

**Afternoon session**

**15:30 Continuation of plenary**

Presentation of the President's report. Plenary will continue with the adoption of decisions, consideration of the venue and date of the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties (agenda item 9), other matters (agenda item 12) and adoption of the draft report of the meeting (agenda item 13).

**18:30 Closure of the meeting**

The Conference President will close the meeting.

## Appendix I

### **Fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention High-level segment “Sound chemicals management: relieving the burden on public health” Rome, 30 and 31 October 2008**

#### **Panel discussions Thursday 30 October, 15:00–18:00**

#### **Introduction**

Ministers and vice-ministers (or their equivalent) are invited to participate in panel discussions that will take up the theme of the high-level segment: “Sound chemicals management: relieving the burden on public health”. To facilitate these discussions a series of three sub-themes have been identified, together with a list of associated issues.

Each panel will comprise some 10 ministers and the final number of panels will depend on the number of ministers participating in the meeting. It is envisaged that the panels will operate in parallel.

The panels, with the assistance of a facilitator, will take up the three sub-themes in various orders. Members of intergovernmental organizations will be requested to be available as resource persons. The goal is to encourage an open exchange of views and experiences between participants.

The key messages emerging from the panels will be presented during the plenary session on the morning of Friday, 31 October.

#### **Focus of the discussions**

Properly managed chemicals contribute to the quantity, variety and quality of food available, enhance people’s health and well-being, reduce the incidence of disease as a result of better hygiene and through vector control and make many other significant positive contributions to our daily lives.

At the same time, improperly managed chemicals can and do cause substantial damage to human health and the environment. Direct impacts are most readily observed in the short term and include poisoning of workers and of wildlife. Longer-term impacts that may be less readily observed include contamination of food and drinking water, degradation of the environment, loss of soil fertility and the resultant decrease in food production, together with human health effects such as cancer or birth defects, cardiovascular and respiratory disease, asthma, allergies and reproductive and nervous system development disorders.

The sound management of chemicals calls for a life-cycle or holistic approach to national decision-making on chemicals that takes into consideration the associated risks from production through storage, use and disposal.

Many countries lack a life-cycle approach to chemicals management in which the full or real costs of the adverse impacts of chemical are taken into account. For example, the direct adverse impacts of chemicals on public health include lost productivity and income owing to ill health and the need to care for sick children or other family members.

Particularly worrying is exposure to chemicals that accumulate in the environment, causing particular harm to the physical and intellectual development of children and preventing them from realizing their full potential in society.

Environmental contamination and resulting habitat loss or impoverishment can also have serious negative impacts on the potential for economic development, including in areas such as tourism, timber and fishing industries, in addition to affecting the emotional well-being of a country’s people. Taken together, these direct and indirect effects can have significant adverse impacts on overall public health.

As part of the World Summit on Sustainable Development plan of action, countries agreed to a common objective that was to “achieve by 2020 that chemicals are used and produced in ways that lead to the minimization of significant adverse effects on human health and the environment.” To attain this objective, countries need to develop effective chemicals management infrastructures. The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions, together with the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, represent a set of tools to assist countries in taking a life-cycle approach to the sound management of chemicals.

At the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention, Parties will consider a set of recommendations aimed at enhancing cooperation and coordination among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions. An integrated approach to the implementation of these three conventions and the Strategic Approach at the national level could be a significant contribution to achieving the objective agreed upon in the World Summit on Sustainable Development plan of action.

The three sub-themes below are proposed for discussion by each panel.

### **1. National perspective**

Successful implementation of the Rotterdam Convention at the national level is highly dependent on the existence of an adequate infrastructure for the sound management of chemicals. In considering possible actions that Governments might take to improve national chemicals management to benefit fully from the Rotterdam Convention, panel members may wish to consider the following points:

- What are some of the major risks to health and the environment posed by chemicals in your country?
- What are the major challenges in your country with respect to sound chemicals management?
- What would be the benefits of an integrated approach to chemicals management involving representatives of the health, agriculture, environment and industry sectors?
- What specific steps would need to be taken to improve coherence and cooperation between the relevant sectors in the national management of chemicals, both substantively and institutionally?
- What is the role of the general public, industry and other stakeholders in achieving sound chemicals management and how can they be involved?
- What actions are needed for the information available under the Rotterdam Convention on hazardous chemicals and on the prior informed consent procedure to strengthen the sound management of chemicals at the national level?
- How can issues relevant to improving the sound management of chemicals be integrated into national development plans, strategies and priorities?

### **2. Regional perspective**

A number of international forums have called for the coherent and coordinated programmatic implementation of the chemicals agenda. All have expressed the need for coordinated action and stressed the importance of building on existing infrastructure to ensure the coordinated and efficient implementation of the chemicals agenda at the regional and national levels. Panel members may wish to consider the following points:

- Are issues with regard to sound chemicals management and the implementation of the chemicals-related conventions addressed in regional forums and meetings of developing countries and countries in transition?
- What kinds of efforts are being undertaken in your country to promote cooperation and coherence in the regional implementation of chemicals-related instruments such as the Rotterdam, Basel and Stockholm conventions?
- Are regional commonalities related to chemicals management issues adequately recognized at the international level?
- What are some areas of possible regional cooperation that would facilitate the implementation of chemicals-related multilateral environmental agreements? [*capacity-building, information-sharing and technology transfer, awareness-raising*]

### **3. Global perspective**

The sound management of chemicals at the national and regional levels should ultimately contribute to the sound management of chemicals worldwide. Global objectives such as those stated in the Millennium Development Goals (which address poverty eradication, education, gender equality, child mortality, maternal health, diseases, environmental sustainability and a global partnership for development), together with the work carried out under chemicals-related multilateral environmental agreements and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, provide a framework for international cooperation on chemical issues. Panel members may wish to consider the following points:

- How is the sound management of chemicals related to the Millennium Development Goals (in particular the health development goals)?
- How might the links between sound chemicals management and cross-cutting areas such as biodiversity, climate change, economic development, trade and food supply be strengthened?

- How does the implementation of the chemicals-related multilateral environmental agreements and the Strategic Approach contribute to achieving global priorities such as the Millennium Development Goals?
- What more needs to be done to assist in empowering Parties to manage chemicals within their national jurisdiction in a more holistic and comprehensive way?
- What global actions could assist with the integration of chemicals management issues into national development assistance plans, strategies and priorities?

## Appendix II

**Fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention**  
**High-level segment**  
**“Sound chemicals management: relieving the burden on public health”**  
**Rome, 30 and 31 October 2008**

**Meeting on support to the programme of work**  
**Friday, 31 October, 14:30–15:30**

The objective of this meeting is to provide participants with an opportunity to express their interest in and possible support for the programme of work of the Convention for the upcoming biennium, as contained in document UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.4/23 (see <http://www.pic.int>), either as possible recipients or possible providers of support to specific areas of work.

The implementation of the Convention’s proposed programme of work for the upcoming biennium is dependent on the availability of resources under the Convention’s Voluntary Special Trust Fund. Expressions of interest will provide strategic guidance to the secretariat in the planning of activities for the biennium.

Parties may wish to express their interest in this discussion as a part of their regional groups through regional and subregional interventions or as expressions of national commitment.

Heads of government delegations, representatives from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations, together with representatives of industries and foundations, are invited to participate in this event.

Proposed agenda:

1. Welcoming remarks and organization of the meeting by the co-executive secretaries;
2. Expressions of interest from possible Parties, regions or sub-regions in participating in the various programme areas;
3. Expressions of interest from possible Parties in funding or providing assistance to various programme areas;
4. Comments by intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations;
5. Summary of discussions;
6. Closure of the meeting.