



# Inter-Ministerial Delegation to Participate in Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm Conventions in Geneva Three Cops to BRS Conventions to Discuss Management of Hazardous Waste, Chemicals and Organic Pollutants

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An inter-ministerial Indian delegation headed by the Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Shri Ajay Narayan Jha, will participate in the 2017 Conference of Parties (COPs) to the Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm (BRS) Conventions. The delegation will include representatives from the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Ministry of External Affairs (MEA)/Permanent Mission of India (PMI) to UN in Geneva, Ministry of Electronics and Information Technology (MeitY), Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), Ministry of Chemicals & Fertilizers (MoC&F), Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare (MoA&FW) and Ministry of Health & Family Welfare (MoH&FW).

The three COPs to BRS Conventions will be held jointly and back-to-back from April 24-May 5, 2017 in Geneva, Switzerland. This year the meetings will also feature a high-level segment to be attended by Ministers of the Parties. The high-level segment is scheduled for the afternoon of May 4 and the morning of May 5, 2017. The theme of the meetings and the high-level segment will be - **"A future detoxified: sound management of chemicals and waste"**.

India is committed towards its obligations of BRS Conventions. It is also important, at the same time, to safeguard the country's interest. In this context, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change is playing an instrumental role in environmentally sound management of hazardous chemicals and waste, keeping in view the overall objectives of sustainable development and growth.

Conference of Parties (COPs) to the BRS Convention include - the 13<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of Parties to "Basel Convention (BC COP 13); the 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of Parties to "Rotterdam Convention (RC COP 8) and 8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Conference of Parties to "Stockholm Convention (SC COP 8). While the Basel Convention will discuss the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal, the Rotterdam Convention will deliberate on the prior informed consent procedure for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade" and the Stockholm Convention is on persistent organic pollutants (POPs)".

The meetings of COPs 2017 to BRS conventions will feature separate sessions on issues pertaining to the three Conventions, as well as joint sessions on common issues of the three Conventions. The agenda of the 2017 BRS COPs meetings cover a wide gamut of issues including - technical guidelines on transboundary movements of electrical and electronic waste and used electrical and electronic equipment; technical guidelines for environmentally sound management of wastes, consisting of, containing or contaminated with low persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in Basel Convention, national reporting, capacity building and technical assistance; listing of chemicals viz chrysotile asbestos, paraquat dichloride, fenthion, trichlorfon, short chain chlorinated paraffins, tributyltin compounds, carbofuran and carbosulfan under Annex III to the Rotterdam Convention and listing of chemicals viz short chain chlorinated paraffins, decabromodiphenyl ether and Hexachlorobutadiene under Annex A, B, and C to the Stockholm Convention. The meetings are highly technical and scientific in nature. The subject matter during negotiations and deliberations in the COPs are of vital importance, which can have far-reaching ramifications on trade and industry in the country in particular, industrial chemicals and electronic and electrical industry.

The most important matters to be deliberated during COPs include - listing of chemicals under Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention may have an impact on industrial growth. The inclusion of chemicals under Rotterdam Convention does not ban the chemical. However, importing countries need to follow the PIC procedure. Listing of hazardous chemicals may lead to an increase in the trade cost, as well as delay the import/export process. Listing of chemicals under Stockholm convention bans/restrict the chemicals for trade, import, export and use along with minimizes unintentional release of POPs.

## BRS Conventions - Brief Background

The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions are multilateral environmental agreements, which share the common objective of protecting human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals and wastes. To enhance cooperation and coordination among the BRS Conventions, their respective conferences of the Parties have taken a series of decisions. This "synergies process" aims to strengthen the implementation of the three

conventions at the national, regional and global levels by providing coherent policy guidance, enhancing efficiency in the provision of support to Parties to the Conventions, reducing their administrative burden and maximising the effective and efficient use of resources at all levels, while maintaining the legal autonomy of these three multilateral environmental agreements. In addition to initiating reforms to the secretariats of the three Conventions on an administrative as well as operational level, this process is changing the way in which the implementation of the Conventions are undertaken at the national and regional levels. Parties to the Conventions and entities supporting countries in the implementation of the Conventions, such as regional centres, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations, also undertake efforts to increase coherence in the implementation of the Conventions.

### **Basel Convention**

The Basel Convention was adopted on March 22, 1989 by the Conference of Plenipotentiaries in Basel, Switzerland, in response to a public outcry, following the discovery, in the 1980s, in Africa and other parts of the developing world of deposits of toxic wastes imported from abroad. Environmental awareness and tightening of environmental regulations in the industrialised world during 1970s and 1980s had led to an increasing public resistance to the disposal of hazardous wastes – in accordance with what became known as the NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard) syndrome – and to an escalation of disposal costs. This in turn led some operators to seek cheap disposal options for hazardous wastes in the developing world, which was lagging in environmental awareness regulations and enforcement mechanisms.

Against this background, the Basel Convention was negotiated in the late 1980s, and at the time of its adoption its thrust to combat the “toxic trade”. The overarching objective of the Basel Convention is to protect human health and the environment against adverse effects of hazardous wastes. Its scope covers a wide range of wastes defined as “hazardous wastes” based on their origin and/or composition and their characteristics, including “other wastes” - the household waste and incinerator ash. The Convention also covers hazardous wastes that are explosive, flammable, poisonous, infectious, corrosive, toxic, or eco-toxic. The Convention aims towards restricting transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and its disposal with environmentally sound management (ESM). The Basel Convention was adopted in 1989 and entered into force on May 5, 1992. India ratified the Convention in June 24, 1992.

### **Rotterdam Convention**

The Rotterdam Convention is a multilateral environmental agreement which prescribes obligations on the importers and exporters of certain hazardous chemicals. Parties are empowered to make informed decisions about the chemicals they wish to import. The Convention's objective is to promote shared responsibility and cooperative efforts among parties in the international trade of listed chemicals in the Rotterdam Convention, to protect human health and the environment, and to contribute to the environmentally sound use of chemicals. The Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure is the mechanism for formally obtaining and disseminating the decisions of importing Parties, as to whether they wish to receive future shipments of those chemicals listed in Annex III of the Convention and for ensuring compliance with these decisions by exporting Parties. As of now, a total of 47 chemicals are listed in Annex III of the Convention. Out of these, 33 are pesticides and 14 industrial chemicals, which are subject to PIC procedures. The Convention was adopted on September 10, 1998 and entered into force on February 24, 2004. India ratified the Convention on May 24, 2005.

### **Stockholm Convention**

The Stockholm Convention is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from a class of chemicals known as Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). These remain intact in the environment for long periods (persistent), become widely distributed geographically (long range transport), accumulate in the fatty tissue of humans and wildlife (bioaccumulation), and have a harmful impact on human health, or on environment (toxic). Under the Convention, the chemicals can be listed for complete elimination from production, use, export and import (Annex-A), Restriction in use and production for specific purpose only (Annex-B) or Unintentional production (Annex-C). The implementation of the Convention requires the parties to take measures to eliminate or reduce the release of these POPs into the environment. Till date, 26 chemicals are listed as POPs under the Stockholm Convention. As of now, India has ratified only the 12 initially listed POPs. The Convention was adopted on May 22, 2001 and entered into force on May 17, 2004. India ratified the Convention on January 13, 2006.

Meetings of the COPs of BRS Conventions are generally held every alternate year. India has participated in the earlier meetings of the COPs of the BRS Conventions. Previously, COP 12 of Basel Convention and COP 7 meetings of Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions were held in Geneva, Switzerland from May 4-15, 2015.

