

BASEL, ROTTERDAM AND STOCKHOLM CONVENTIONS

Secretariats of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions

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Date: 27 June 2022

Statement by the Executive Secretary of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions

Mr Co-chairs,

A healthy Ocean is crucial to life on our planet, still, the Ocean remains the ultimate destination of all the chemicals and waste generate on land. Whilst plastic is visible, imagine the thousands of other chemicals – nutrients, pesticides, industrial chemicals - that currently find their way into our ocean. In 2017 a study found unexpectedly high levels of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) inside creatures living at the bottom of the Kermadec and Mariana trenches in the Pacific Ocean, two of the deepest places on Earth. Earlier this year, researchers from New Zealand found for the first time microplastics in freshly fallen Antarctic snow.

Mr Co-chairs, the situation is worrying and we need effective and coordinated international ocean governance as essential to keep the Ocean and our planet healthy. The Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Chemicals in International Trade, and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, are three conventions that are taking action on ocean pollution.

In a landmark amendment in 2019, the Basel Convention become the first international treaty to specifically regulate disposal and management of plastic pollution.

The Stockholm Convention, has been instrumental in banning and restricting a growing list of persistent organic pollutants.

However, the global distribution of those chemicals and wastes means that all countries needs to be engaged. Capacities for waste and chemicals management vary significantly from country to country. Many countries do not yet have the necessary laws in place to manage those chemicals and wastes. Illegal trade in both wastes and illicit chemicals is rampant, most of which ends up in remote areas of the oceans. Our event tomorrow together with United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime and the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation, will hopefully, highlight the importance of enforcement for environmental protection.

With the agreement for negotiations to begin on a international treaty on plastic wastes, the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm convention will continue to strengthen the capacities of countries to ensure the sound management of chemicals and wastes. Stemming ocean pollution remains a priority and should remain a priority for our planet in many decades to come.

Thank you.

Rolph Payet
Executive Secretary