Fourth Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (23–29 April 2024, Canada)

Agenda item 4: Preparation of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment

23 April 2024

Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary of the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions

Ladies and gentlemen,

Today, we gather here to address one of the most pressing environmental challenges of our time: plastic pollution. The United Nations Environment Assembly resolution 5/14 has underscored the critical need for cooperation and coordination among international conventions to combat this global threat effectively. Specifically, the conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm conventions have called for close cooperation with the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee process.

The approach to tackling plastic pollution necessitates a shift towards a circular model—a model that emphasizes not just the management of waste but also the reduction of waste generation and the promotion of resource efficiency. A circular approach to plastic management entails viewing plastics not as disposable items but as resources that can be reused or recycled. It encompasses the entire lifecycle of plastic, from production to disposal, and seeks to minimize environmental impact at every stage.

The Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm conventions share a common objective: to protect human health and the environment from hazardous chemicals and from hazardous and other wastes requiring special consideration. Under these conventions, key elements such as controlling transboundary movements of plastic waste, ensuring environmentally sound management of plastic waste, and identifying and controlling plastic additives are addressed comprehensively.

The Basel Convention, for instance, requires measures to minimize plastics waste generation and manage such wastes in an environmentally sound manner. It also controls transboundary movements through a Prior Informed Consent procedure. Recent amendments extend these provisions to cover all plastic waste, reinforcing the importance of environmentally sound management.
Similarly, the Stockholm Convention targets Persistent Organic Pollutants, including plastic additives, through measures to reduce releases from intentional and unintentional sources. It empowers Parties to develop strategies for identifying and managing products and wastes containing these particularly hazardous chemicals. The Convention also has a mechanism to review and add new chemicals to the list of persistent organic pollutants in its annexes.

Meanwhile, the Rotterdam Convention facilitates shared responsibility in international chemical trade, including plastic additives, and promotes their environmentally sound use. Its procedures for banning or restricting hazardous chemicals and pesticides ensure informed decision-making and risk reduction.

But it's not just about policies and regulations; it's about action. These conventions offer a lifeline of support, providing technical assistance, financial mechanism, and regional centers for capacity building. They foster cooperation, enhance coordination, and strengthen compliance, paving the way for effective implementation.

The recent adoption of the “Global Framework for Chemicals” in Bonn strengthens our collective efforts, providing a vision for a planet free from harm due to chemicals and waste, ensuring a safe, healthy, and sustainable future.

Looking ahead, the new international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution should build upon these foundations. Institutionalized and effective cooperation, coordination and complementarity among the existing Multilateral Environmental Agreements such as the Basel, Rotterdam and the Stockholm conventions and the new instrument are paramount in addressing the complex challenges of plastic pollution. By leveraging our collective efforts and resources, we can achieve tangible progress towards a cleaner and healthier planet for future generations. We hereby reaffirm our commitment to this endeavor.

Thank you.