

RC-3/6: Regional and national delivery of technical assistance

The Conference of the Parties,

Recalling the comprehensive proposal for the regional delivery of technical assistance considered at the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties and reflected in decisions RC-1/14 and RC-2/4 on technical assistance adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its first and second meetings respectively,

Also recalling the provisions of the Rotterdam Convention on technical assistance, especially its article 16,

Noting that the hazardous chemicals and pesticides covered by the Convention contribute to poverty through their adverse effects on human health and environmental resources and that effective implementation of the Convention contributes to meeting the Millennium Development Goals,

Stressing the importance of technical assistance in enabling Parties, especially developing countries, in particular the least developed among them, and countries with economies in transition, to implement the Convention,

Emphasizing the need to promote coordination and cooperation among international organizations, conventions and programmes, in particular the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management, as well as among Parties, designated national authorities, customs services and other relevant organizations in the provision of technical assistance,

Recalling the role of the secretariat of the Convention as laid down in its article 19,

Emphasizing the need to achieve effective and coordinated delivery of technical assistance,

Noting with appreciation the work of the secretariat in the implementation of decisions RC-1/14 and RC-2/4 on technical assistance as outlined in the note by the secretariat on the subject,¹

1. *Requests* Parties that are in a position to do so to contribute to the Convention's Voluntary Special Trust Fund in support of technical assistance activities;
2. *Adopts* the programme of work for the regional and national delivery of technical assistance for 2007–2008 and the proposed priorities set forth in the annex to the present decision;
3. *Requests* the secretariat to implement its technical assistance in line with article 19 of the Convention and to focus the programme of work on issues and needs identified by developing countries and countries with economies in transition and to pay particular attention to the needs of Parties in meeting the requirements of paragraph 2 of article 10;
4. *Requests* the Bureau, working with the secretariat, to review progress and priorities with respect to specific technical assistance activities at the midpoint of the biennium;
5. *Requests* the secretariat to report to the Conference of the Parties at its fourth session on the experience gained in the regional and national delivery of technical assistance, also taking into account the activities of donors and implementing organizations, information exchange on technical assistance activities and opportunities for joint activities with the secretariats of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management;
6. *Also requests* the secretariat to prepare a detailed costed programme of activities for the regional and national delivery of technical assistance, based on the level of resources likely to be available from all sources, for the biennium 2009–2010 for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its fourth meeting, taking into account the findings concerning activities of other donors in order to enable closer cooperation between the secretariat and other donors.

¹ UNEP/FAO/RC/COP.3/14.

Annex to decision RC-3/6

I. Elements of a programme of work for 2007–2008 on the regional delivery of technical assistance

1. The present annex contains a programme of work for 2007–2008 for the regional delivery of technical assistance based on the experience gained. It sets out specific activities to be undertaken in responding to the needs of countries and the partners that would be involved in delivering these activities. In addition, it notes the importance of the need to develop measures of success or indicators of progress in order to have an understanding of the effectiveness of these activities. The appendix to the present annex contains a tabular summary of the estimated costs associated with the implementation of this programme of work.

A. Resource kit

2. The resource kit will be updated to reflect experience gained in its use, especially regarding the development of new documents and the revising and reprinting of existing materials. As practical tools to assist countries, further case studies based on the experience of selected countries in the implementation of specific aspects of the Convention, for example the development of legal or administrative infrastructure and integration with work on the implementation of the Stockholm Convention, will be developed. Continued efforts will be made to ensure that as many of the documents as possible are available in six languages.

3. The training materials set out in section D of the resource kit will be evaluated, in particular the prototype of the interactive compact disk to facilitate continuous and self-directed training at the national level, in order to meet the challenges that arise from frequent changes in designated national authority in some countries.

4. Section E of the resource kit, on cross-cutting issues, is designed to provide guidance on how the work of the Convention might be integrated with the activities carried out under other international agreements or programmes. It includes references to selected sources of general information on chemicals that may be of interest or use to countries in implementing the Convention. It is proposed that this section of the resource kit should continue to be refined and expanded to reflect new information as it becomes available.

B. National and subregional meetings

1. Developing national action plans or strategies on the implementation of the Convention

5. As a key first step in defining country needs, the national and subregional meetings for the preparation of national action plans or strategies for the implementation of the Convention will be continued. The methodology and approach will be modified as necessary to reflect experience gained. Measures of the success of this programme will include the ability of countries to meet their obligations under the Convention, in particular with regard to the submission of notifications of final regulatory actions and import responses. A further measure of success will be the number of requests for technical assistance submitted by Parties, based on the priority actions identified in their national action plans or strategies.

6. As of May 2006, there are in the order of 47 developing country Parties which have yet to develop national action plans or strategies for the implementation of the Convention. Work should be undertaken with these countries in 2007–2008, building on the national implementation plans developed under the Stockholm Convention, and in cooperation with partners such as UNITAR and the regional offices of FAO and UNEP. It is proposed to convene three national and five subregional meetings (involving a maximum of four countries each) annually.

7. In cooperation with the regional offices of FAO, it is proposed that national seminars be convened for the Parties that participated in the subregional consultations held in 2006 and for the 40 or so Parties which will participate in subregional meetings in the 2007–2008 biennium. This is particularly important given the relatively small number of participants per country in the subregional meetings. The national seminars provide an opportunity to seek broader support for the action plans or strategies, to review the status of implementation of the action plans or strategies and to give further consideration to country needs and priorities for action.

2. **Thematic meetings: national and subregional meetings on specific issues**

8. The demand for national and subregional meetings on specific issues is country driven. It is proposed that those Parties which have developed national action plans or strategies for the implementation of the Convention will be given priority for participation in these meetings.

9. It is clear that, as national action plans or strategies are developed by a broader range of countries, opportunities for developing meetings on different issues will arise in the course of 2007–2008. It is proposed that these issues should be identified through a systematic review by the secretariat of the priorities for action at the regional level, as identified in the national action plans or strategies developed by Parties. In order to respond to the issues, it is proposed that, subject to the availability of funds, three national and three subregional meetings, involving a limited number of Parties, should be considered on specific issues over the biennium. The issues, location and countries to be involved will need to be determined on a case-by-case basis following a review of the priorities for action identified in the national plans or strategies completed in 2006 and 2007. The estimated costs of convening these meetings are presented in the appendix to the present annex.

10. In the meantime, it is proposed that two series of workshops be developed focusing on the trade aspects of the Convention: one for exporting countries and a second for exporting countries and their principal trade partners (for example, for five importing countries within the exporting country's region or in different regions). These meetings could focus on those developing country Parties which are major manufacturers and exporters of chemicals such as Brazil, China and India. A further variation could involve a joint project with one or more of the member States of the European Union and a limited number of their principal trading partners in developing countries. The specifics of the location of the meetings and the countries that might be involved remain to be determined. The estimated costs of convening such meetings with major exporters and between exporters and their principal trading partners are presented in the appendix to the present annex.

11. Severely hazardous pesticide formulations continue to cause problems under the conditions of use in many countries. The European Union is funding a three year project (2005–2008) with the Pesticide Action Network to strengthen community health monitoring capabilities relevant to pesticide poisonings in five African countries. It is proposed that the collaboration with this project, which was initiated in 2006, should be continued with a view to establishing appropriate links between designated national authorities and community health monitoring activities in the five pilot countries and a process for the preparation and submission of proposals for severely hazardous pesticide formulations under article 6 of the Convention. The estimated costs of this continued collaboration are presented in the appendix to the present annex.

3. **Fostering cooperation among designated national authorities in a given region**

12. As noted elsewhere, one of the outcomes of the work with the regional offices of FAO and UNEP has been the development of regional strategies for the implementation of the Convention. These strategies have been loosely based on the prior informed consent (PIC) regions. It is thought that clustering countries in these regions may encourage cooperation among designated national authorities and facilitate follow-up by the regional and subregional offices of FAO.

13. It is proposed that a regional or subregional meeting of designated national authorities should be convened in each of the seven PIC regions in 2007 and 2008 with a view to addressing specific issues of concern to Parties. To facilitate constructive discussion, it is proposed that participation should be limited to around 30 participants. In order to accommodate the size of some of the regions and the various language profiles of the regions, some 10 meetings are envisaged through 2007–2008. It is proposed that the issues, location and countries to be involved will need to be determined on a case-by-case basis.

C. **Working directly with individual countries on specific issues**

14. The way in which the specific needs of individual Parties might be addressed depends on the issue of concern and the Parties involved. In some instances, a national or subregional meeting may not be an effective way of responding to the identified need. In such cases, a more efficient means of assistance might include having a regional expert or international consultant work directly with the designated national authority in a country; alternatively, it may be possible to address the issue through integration with activities under way in the country or at the regional level through bilateral aid projects, work on related multilateral environmental agreements such as the Stockholm or Basel conventions, the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM) or the work of other regional or subregional organizations.

15. In some instances, depending on available resources, the secretariat might arrange for the designated national authority to work with a regional expert; in others, the secretariat might facilitate contact between Parties requesting assistance and those programmes which might be able to provide such assistance.

D. Partners in the regional delivery of technical assistance

16. The secretariat will continue to look for opportunities to initiate and strengthen cooperation with regional and subregional organizations involved in chemicals management activities. A number of organizations are active regionally or within certain groups of countries. Some of these, such as the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme, the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment and the Alliance of Small Island States, have been involved to a greater or lesser extent in chemical safety issues. The secretariat will continue to explore opportunities to encourage such organizations to integrate Rotterdam Convention issues into their work. Similarly, regional and subregional organizations and networks that are directly involved in chemicals management will continue to be informed of the activities relevant to the implementation of the Rotterdam Convention and, as appropriate, invited to participate in regional and subregional activities. Cooperation with the World Health Organization will continue, with particular attention to its programme on establishing poison control centres. Cooperation with the Basel Convention regional centres will also continue. Some of the specific regional partners with whom cooperation is foreseen in 2007 and 2008 include the following.

1. Regional offices of FAO and UNEP

17. Annual meetings with representatives of the FAO and UNEP regional offices are proposed as continuation of the informal newsletter on regional activities circulated within the secretariat and among the regional offices. A meeting with representatives of FAO and UNEP regional offices at the end of 2006 will provide an opportunity to obtain feedback on experience with the delivery of technical assistance activities in the regions in 2006 and valuable input to developing a programme of activities for 2007 in the light of the outcome of the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties. It would also provide an opportunity for the regional offices to develop further the regional strategies on the implementation of the Convention initiated at the meeting with representatives of FAO and UNEP regional offices held in November 2005. A similar meeting is proposed for the end of 2007 to review progress in 2006 and assist in the preparation of planning activities for 2008 and in developing further ideas for meeting the technical assistance needs of countries in preparation for fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, to be held in 2008.

2. Group of regional experts

18. Representatives of the group of regional experts created in 2005 have worked with the secretariat in the delivery of the national and subregional meetings on the implementation of the Convention. In addition, the group is seen as a means of promoting cooperation among Parties within and between subregions. Annual meetings of this group are proposed in order to follow up on the experience gained in 2006 and 2007, to provide an opportunity to include new experts in the group and perhaps to expand the range of expertise available within the group.

3. Sahelian Pesticides Committee (CSP)

19. In order to strengthen the link between the work of CSP and the designated national authorities in the member countries of CSP, it is proposed that the participation of those authorities in the two scheduled meetings of CSP in 2007 and 2008 should be sponsored. The goal of this activity is to explore further how the work of CSP might assist member countries in meeting their obligations under the Rotterdam Convention. It is also proposed that, over the period 2007–2008, there should be individual visits to the designated national authorities in the member countries of CSP that are Parties to the Convention in order to assist in follow-up, in particular with regard to submitting notifications of final regulatory action and decisions of future imports of chemicals listed in Annex III to the Convention.

4. Asia Pacific Plant Protection Commission (APPPC)

20. The next session of APPPC is scheduled for September 2007. In follow-up to the work initiated at the meeting in September 2005, the secretariat proposes that the participation in the meeting of regional experts or a limited number of designated national authorities from representative member countries should be sponsored in order to promote the inclusion of the Rotterdam Convention in the APPPC work programme.

5. Other partners

21. The nature of the technical assistance activity will, in many instances, determine the choice of partners by the secretariat.
22. Cooperation with the World Customs Organization will be strengthened in part as a result of the entry into force in 2007 of the Harmonized System custom codes for the first group of chemicals in Annex III to the Convention. This will facilitate enforcement of national import decisions by Parties and provide an opportunity to work with the World Customs Organization to highlight the importance of communication between designated national authorities and customs officials. In addition, cooperative or collaborative activities with customs officials through the Green Customs Initiative of UNEP, the secretariats of other multilateral environmental agreements and other relevant organizations will continue through 2007–2008.
23. Integration with activities under the Basel and Stockholm conventions will be further explored. Based on the outcome of the review of the completed national implementation plans for the Stockholm Convention and feedback from national and subregional meetings, consideration will be given to the need to revise the relevant guidance documents in order to strengthen the links between national implementation plans and associated action plans under the Stockholm Convention and the obligations of countries under the Rotterdam Convention. Any revisions of the guidance will be developed in cooperation with the secretariat of the Stockholm Convention. In addition, national focal points for the Basel and Stockholm conventions as well as SAICM will continue to be invited to participate in the national and subregional meetings on developing national action plans or strategies for the implementation of the Rotterdam Convention. Their participation in developing these action plans or strategies is seen as a key step in promoting an integrated approach to the implementation of these conventions and related chemicals management activities at the national level.

E. Measuring progress - indicators of success

24. The work with the regional offices of FAO and UNEP provides an opportunity for the secretariat to benefit from lessons learned in the delivery of technical assistance. This experience is in turn used to further develop and refine a programme of work that meets the technical assistance needs of Parties. There are a range of fairly straightforward quantitative indicators that are also being used to measure the impact of the technical assistance activities in support of the Rotterdam Convention. These include the number of notifications of final regulatory action and import responses submitted to the secretariat as well as requests for assistance in the implementation of the Convention. It may be of interest to explore the feasibility of developing longer-term indicators that would assist in determining whether the Convention itself is meeting its overall objective of protecting human health and the environment.

II. Next steps

A. Participation and attendance

25. In working with countries in recent years, the experience of the secretariat has been that the response to invitations to nominate participants to subregional and regional workshops is generally low. At the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the secretariat provided a list of eligible countries for participation in the workshops to be convened by UNITAR, which produced much greater results. It is therefore proposed that the secretariat should compile lists of Parties who have not yet had an opportunity to develop a national action plan or strategy on the implementation of the Convention. This list will be posted on the Convention website, highlighted in the PIC Circular and circulated to official contact points and designated national authorities with a request for Parties to indicate within a specified timeframe, for example two months, their interest in participating at meetings and to designate a contact point. Based on the responses received and the resources available to the secretariat, meetings will be scheduled over the 2007–2008 biennium.
26. A similar approach is proposed for identifying countries to participate in the subregional meetings on specific issues and those meetings aimed at fostering cooperation among designated national authorities.

B. Planning: funding and priorities

27. The ability to deliver this programme of technical assistance is based on the availability of funds in the voluntary trust fund over the course of 2007–2008. It is unlikely that sufficient funds will have been received to fund the full programme by the time of the third meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Furthermore, it is recognized that certain donors may decide to earmark funds for one or more of the proposed activities.

28. In order to make the best use of the available resources to assist Parties in the implementation of the Convention, developing a national action plan or strategy for the implementation of the Convention and a set of priorities for action is considered an essential first step. Once these action plans and priorities are identified, Parties can seek assistance from a range of sources, not only the secretariat. Similarly, experience has demonstrated that regional partners are key to the effective delivery of technical assistance. For these reasons, the Conference of the Parties agreed to the following order of priority when reviewing available funding for the programme of work for 2007–2008:

(a) National and subregional meetings on developing national action plans or strategies for the implementation of the Convention and the associated national seminars (paragraphs 5–7 above);

(b) Meetings with representatives of the regional offices of FAO and UNEP and the regional experts, together with the updating and revision of the resource kit (paragraphs 2–4 and 17–18 above);

(c) Activities with other partners including CILSS, APPPC, WCO and Stockholm Convention (paragraphs 19–20 and 22–23 above);

(d) Thematic meetings on specific issues, in particular those related to trade and severely hazardous pesticide formulations (paragraphs 8–11 above);

(e) Fostering cooperation among designated national authorities (paragraphs 12–13 above).

29. It is recognized that a review of these priorities and further guidance to the secretariat at the midpoint of the biennium on the implementation of these activities would be beneficial. It is proposed that the Bureau should be invited to assume this role.

30. In addition, the secretariat will need to develop a report on technical assistance activities for consideration by the Conference of the Parties at its fourth meeting and a programme of activities for the next biennium (2009–2010).

Appendix to the programme of work for 2007–2008 on the regional delivery of technical assistance

Summary of the costs of individual elements of the proposed programme of work for the regional and national delivery of technical assistance for the biennium 2007–2008

	Unit cost (US\$)	2007 (US\$)	2008 (US\$)	Total (US\$)
A. Resource kit (paragraphs 29–30)				
• New documents, case studies and legal guide		50,000		50,000
• New documents, case studies and integration with national implementation plans under the Stockholm Convention			50,000	50,000
• Electronic learning tool		30,000		30,000
Subtotal		80,000	50,000	130,000
B. National and subregional meetings				
<i>i) Developing national action plans or strategies (paragraphs 5–7)</i>				
• 3 national meetings	20,000	60,000	60,000	120,000
• 5 subregional meetings (max. 4 countries)	35,000	175,000	175,000	350,000
• 20 national seminars	4,000	80,000	80,000	160,000
Subtotal		315,000	315,000	630,000
<i>ii) Thematic meetings – specific issues</i>				
• 3 national meetings (paragraph 9)	40,000	120,000		120,000
• 3 meetings involving 4 trade partners (paragraph 10)	80,000		240,000	240,000
• 2 meetings on severely hazardous pesticide formulations (one in French and one in English) (paragraph 11)	10,000	20,000		20,000
Subtotal		140,000	240,000	380,000
<i>iii) Fostering cooperation among designated national authorities (paragraphs 12–13)</i>				
• 5 subregional meetings each year	30,000–60,000	150,000–300,000	150,000–300,000	300,000–600,000
Subtotal		150,000–300,000	150,000–300,000	300,000–600,000
C. Working directly with countries on specific issues (paragraphs 14–15)		50,000	50,000	100,000
Subtotal		50,000	50,000	100,000
D. Partners in the regional delivery of technical assistance				
<i>i) Regional offices of FAO and UNEP (paragraph 17)</i>	70,000	70,000	70,000	140,000
<i>ii) Group of regional experts (paragraph 18)</i>	50,000	50,000	50,000	100,000
Subtotal		120,000	120,000	240,000
<i>iii) CSP (paragraph 19)</i>				
• Meeting of designated national authority and CSP each year	20,000	20,000	20,000	40,000
• One visit to each of 8 Parties	6,000	24,000	24,000	48,000
<i>iv) APPPC (paragraph 20)</i>	15,000	15,000		15,000
Subtotal		59,000	44,000	97,000
E. Measuring success				
• Work on indicators (paragraph 24)		20,000		20,000
Total		934,000–1,084,000	969,000–1,119,000	1,903,000–2,203,000