



National Follow-up Seminar Report on Industrial Chemicals under the Rotterdam Convention Belize



**National Follow-Up Seminar for the Sound Management of
Industrial Chemicals under the Rotterdam Convention**

Thursday 30th July, 2015
The Best Western Biltmore Hotel
Belize City, Belize



30TH JULY 2015

BEST WESTERN BILTMORE HOTEL, BELIZE CITY, BELIZE

BACKGROUND

The Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (SRC) has funded, in collaboration with the Basel Convention Regional Centre for Training and Technology Transfer for the Caribbean Region (BCRC-Caribbean), a programme on the Sound Management of Industrial Chemicals under the Rotterdam Convention for the Caribbean region. The programme is expected to achieve the following objectives:

1. To facilitate capacity-development of developing country Parties to assess and manage risks, prepare and communicate import responses, and take decisions on final regulatory actions for hazardous industrial chemicals listed under the Rotterdam Convention in accordance with the PIC procedure;
2. To provide an opportunity for the promotion and coordination of integrated implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions;
3. To generate on-the-ground results and experiences that will also be fed as case studies into the electronic toolbox of the Inter-Organisation Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) that assists countries at differing levels of economic, technical and institutional development to manage industrial chemicals.

In order to achieve the objectives, the Programme involved three (3) core activities:

- holding an 'Introductory Workshop on Industrial Chemicals under the Rotterdam Convention for the Caribbean Sub-Region' for key stakeholders involved in industrial chemicals management at the national level for the Caribbean Parties and Signatories to the Rotterdam Convention;
- facilitation of a National Chemical Profile update in three (3) pilot countries in the Caribbean region: Belize, St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago);
- facilitation of a National Follow-up Seminar in the three (3) pilot countries to set up a national committee for chemicals management and refine the national frameworks for the management of industrial chemicals.

The entire Programme is expected to result in enhanced awareness of the importance of the Rotterdam Convention among the decision-makers at the national level involved in the management of industrial chemicals. It is also expected to improve the processes and tools used in the development and strengthening of national infrastructure for industrial chemicals management and its outputs.

In line with meeting the requirements of the Programme, the BCRC-Caribbean hosted a one-day national follow-up seminar at the Best Western Biltmore Hotel in Belize City, Belize on the 30th July 2015. The seminar focused on organizing a National Committee to address the Rotterdam Convention obligations on industrial chemicals and refine the national framework for the management of industrial chemicals developed at the introductory sub-regional workshop for Belize. The National Follow-up

Seminar also provided an opportunity to collect any outstanding data to finalize the National Chemical Profile update for Belize as well as to present the findings of the report. The seminar also provided the opportunity for the stakeholders to discuss the way forward for chemicals management in Belize.

SEMINAR PROCEEDINGS

The seminar began with an official call to order and welcome of participants by Mr. Aldo Cansino (Environmental Officer, Department of Environment (DOE)). He also provided a brief description of the collaboration between the Government of Belize with the BCRC-Caribbean as it relates to the sound management of chemicals. Members of the BCRC-Caribbean were introduced, followed by a safety briefing explaining the evacuation procedure for the Best Western Biltmore Hotel.

Opening remarks were made by Mr. Martin Alegría (Chief Environmental Officer, DOE). He welcomed the participants to the workshop and spoke on the international conventions, placing emphasis on the Rotterdam Convention and the Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure. Mr. Alegría (DOE) discussed the importance of the national chemical profile and the need for updating the document on a regular basis. He thanked Dr. Khan (Director, BCRC-Caribbean) and the BCRC-Caribbean for their assistance in executing the project and encouraged participants to provide feedback on the document. He also thanked all the participants who have been involved in the project from its inception.

Opening remarks were then made by Dr. Khan (BCRC-Caribbean) who acknowledged each participant and thanked them for their attendance. He expressed his gratitude to be present for the day's proceedings which represented a culmination of the work conducted to produce the updated National Chemical Profile for Belize. A brief overview of the project was also provided with mention being made to the other participating project countries (St. Vincent and the Grenadines and Trinidad and Tobago). Dr. Khan (BCRC-Caribbean) briefly informed the participants on another project which the BCRC-Caribbean and the Government of Belize would be collaborating on in the near future. He stated that this project would be based on persistent organic pollutants and emphasized its implications on future projects.

Mr. Alexander Mangwiro (BRS Secretariat) gave opening remarks via skype. He welcomed the participants to the National Follow-up Seminar on behalf of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. He provided a brief background on the overall project and spoke about the importance of industrial chemicals within different economic sectors. He emphasized the key role and objectives of the Rotterdam Convention and highlighted the challenges faced by developing countries to conduct risk assessments and to facilitate risk management of industrial chemicals. Mr. Mangwiro (BRS Secretariat) mentioned that the overall goal of this project deals with improving the capacities of countries to manage chemicals, hence the importance of developing ownership of this programme for the sustainability and continuation of the activities, and to come up with ideas for future tools and mechanisms to improve industrial chemicals management infrastructures and systems.

The participants then introduced themselves. They included representatives from the following ministries, agencies, private sector, and other organisations and associations:

- BCRC-Caribbean;
- DOE, Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Sustainable Development;
- Ministry of Health;
- Ministry of Finance and Economic Development;
- Pesticides Control Board (PCB);
- Fabrigas Belize Limited;
- Pesticides Control Board;
- Belize Customs and Excise Department; and
- Belize Natural Energy Trust (BNE).

Three (3) technical presentations were completed and they were based on the following:

- the programme overview;
- a summary of the national chemical profile update highlighting new findings as well as deficiencies and the recommendations to achieve the sound management of chemicals; and
- the development of a national chemical framework for Belize.

The final agenda and the official list of participants for the National Follow-up Seminar can be found in Annexes I and II respectively. The presentations are attached as separate documents to this report.

PRESENTATION 1: PROJECT OVERVIEW

“Sound Management of Industrial Chemicals: Programme Overview” by Dr. Ahmad Khan (Director, BCRC-Caribbean)

This presentation provided a brief overview of the Basel Convention, its operations and institutional framework. Dr. Khan (BCRC-Caribbean) spoke on the national implementation and compliance with the Convention as well as the linkages with other Conventions (Rotterdam, Stockholm and Minamata) with regards to chemicals and chemical wastes. The functions of the BCRC-Caribbean and other regional centres with similar portfolios were discussed in terms of training, technology transfer, information dissemination, awareness raising and consultancy to other countries within the region.

The presentation continued with an overview of the Rotterdam Convention, its purpose and objectives. The scope of the programme “Sound Management of Industrial Chemicals under the Rotterdam Convention for the Caribbean sub-region” was explained together with the programme objectives, activities and outcomes. The guidelines used for the project was also explained.

Questions and Comments

- Dr. Khan (BCRC-Caribbean) inquired on the use of dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT) in Belize. Ms. Serrut (PCB) confirmed that DDT is no longer used in Belize.
- Dr. Khan (BCRC-Caribbean) mentioned that the importations of DDT and other like chemicals that fall under Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention are automatically barred from importation into Belize. He also inquired about the use of DDT currently stocked in Belize. Ms. Serrut (PCB) stated that DDT is classified as severely restricted within the country, but they would have a right to import if there is an issue with malaria. She then stated that this would be an issue for the Ministry of Health. Dr. Khan (BCRC-Caribbean) sought further clarification on whether under normal circumstances any chemical listed under Annex III was barred from importation. Ms. Serrut (PCB) explained that being listed in Annex III does not signify that a chemical is banned, but the importance lies in notifying the Convention. She stated that for import of any chemical listed in Annex III there would be a requirement to notify the Convention about the country's decision to import. Ms. Serrut (PCB) further mentioned that notification is only required for the first importation of the chemical as exemplified by European Countries and the United States although the latter has not ratified the Convention.

PRESENTATION 2: NATIONAL CHEMICAL PROFILE UPDATE

"National Chemical Profile Update for Belize" by Dr. Danelle Dhaniram (Research Analyst, BCRC-Caribbean)

This presentation began with an overview of the importance, purpose and benefits of having a national chemical profile document for a country. The methodology used to update the national chemical profile for Belize was discussed and a summary of the stakeholders' contributions as well as the format of the updated national chemical profile document were outlined. The presentation then discussed the findings from the national chemical profile update for Belize with regards to the sound management of industrial chemicals throughout their life cycles, in term of the legislative, institutional and infrastructural capacities, data viability, emergency preparedness, international linkages, awareness and understanding, as well as availability of human resources in country. The presentation concluded with a summary of the chemicals management situation in Belize.

Questions/Comments

- Mr. Recimos (Customs and Excise Department) inquired on the existence of obsolete chemicals stored at the Corazol Community Hospital. Ms. Serrut (PCB) said that she would clarify the figures but the chemicals in question would include obsolete chemicals and pesticides. She added that PCB's technicians are currently looking at all health facilities to determine the quantity of obsolete chemicals and pesticides.
- Mr. Recimos (Customs and Excise Department) commented that there was no information with regards to the tourism sector and chemical use. He presumed that this could be as a result of the use of domestic chemicals as opposed to those that are heavily regulated. He added that there needs to be vested interest in looking at these types of chemicals due to high

consumption, notwithstanding those that are currently being dealt with. He stated the need to have a mechanism to capture the chemicals being used. Dr. Dhaniram (BCRC-Caribbean) responded that the report focused on industrial chemicals, but agreed that the service sector contributes to chemicals and in terms of general chemical management it is important, but was out of scope for the project.

- Mr. Alegria (DOE) commented that there is also an issue with the project working committee for chemicals management in Belize and sought further clarification from Dr. Khan (BCRC-Caribbean). Dr. Khan (BCRC-Caribbean) commented that the project working committee was set up for the GEF funded project which was scheduled to commence in September. He added that this project was the one on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and it is a work in progress.
- Mr. Alegria (DOE) further commented that there is a need to look at the coordinating mechanism for chemicals to allow for flexibility in addressing local initiatives. Dr. Khan (BCRC-Caribbean) stated that three key agencies were identified in the creation of a committee. These agencies are the DOE, Ministry of Health and the Solid Waste Authority. He also mentioned that the Solid Waste Authority was important because the project included chemical wastes management.
- Mr. Alegria (DOE) stated that other initiatives exist which include stakeholders from the agriculture sector. He stated that these initiatives are flexible in addressing other chemicals not defined as industrial chemicals and may involve other relevant stakeholders. The Integrated Chemicals Management legislation and its enforcement were also highlighted.
- Mr. Recimos (Customs and Excise Department) sought clarification on the classification of white lime as an industrial chemical. He expressed his concern about the production of white lime in several villages in Belize stated its use in the sugar and shrimp industries. He also mentioned that chlorine gas is imported into Belize for the manufacture of bleach. Mr. Recimos (Customs and Excise Department) informed the participants about incidents where water contaminated with oil from the petroleum industry, is intentionally discharged into the soil each month. He also raised his concern about the lack of transparency in the management of the brewery and distilleries. This is exacerbated by the putrid smell emanating from these industries. Mr. Roches (BNE) then stated that occupation, safety and health issues fall under the Ministry of Labour and as such any information should be requested from that Ministry.
- Mr. Roches (BNE) noted that the crude oil production chart mentioned in the presentation provided data until 2009 and committed to providing more recent data, as well as information on chemical spills which may have occurred in Belize.

PRESENTATION 3: DEVELOPMENT OF A NATIONAL FRAMEWORK FOR INDUSTRIAL CHEMICALS

“National Framework development for the management of industrial chemicals” by Dr. Danelle Dhaniram (Research Analyst, BCRC-Caribbean)

This presentation began with a recap on the Rotterdam Convention and explained how the Convention works in terms of managing chemicals. The procedure for the implementation of a National Chemical Committee was highlighted, inclusive of the need for the establishment of an effective project planning and management structure. She stated that the proposed structure to manage chemicals in Belize took

into consideration the deficiencies of the current system and made recommendations to be implemented for its refinement. This presentation also gave an overview on the way forward to manage chemicals in Belize. Emphasis was placed on legislative reform, the strengthening of the National Coordination Committee for chemicals management and, information transfer and educational awareness.

Questions/Comments

- Mr. Bodden (Ministry of Health) expressed his concern about the omission of the Ministry of Health as a member of the proposed committee, since one of its objectives is 'to reduce the impact of chemicals on human health'. Dr. Dhaniram (BCRC-Caribbean) questioned whether the PCB falls under Ministry of Health. Mr. Cansino (DOE) clarified that the PCB fall under the Ministry of Agriculture and not the Ministry of Health. Dr. Dhaniram (BCRC-Caribbean) assured him that his concerns were noted and that the Ministry of Health would be included under the section for Ministries.
- Mr. Cansino (DOE) questioned the relevance of the Ministry of Finance as a member in the proposed core national chemical committee. Dr. Dhaniram (BCRC-Caribbean) explained that the Customs and Excise Division falls under the Ministry of Finance and they are a key stakeholder in managing the import and export of chemicals at the country's borders.
- Mr. Recimos (Customs and Excise Department) indicated that in terms of the data, the category labeled "Other" should include the Social Security Board because they hold a wealth of information with regards to occupational hazards due to payments and claims. He also stated that the Ministry of Agriculture should also be included as a separate entity as the Belize Agricultural Health Authority (BAHA) is just one institute within that Ministry. He clarified that the information required may not necessarily fall under BAHA but under the general ambit of the Ministry of Agriculture. Ms. Serrut (PCB) commented that with respect to chemicals management it falls under the authority of the Pesticides Control Board and BAHA. Mr. Bodden (Ministry of Health) suggested that one of the ways to manage chemicals was to give farmers information about crops. He stated that this may not necessarily be the responsibility of the BAHA but the Ministry of Agriculture. He added that the overarching core for managing agrochemicals is BAHA, but that the Ministry of Agriculture has a responsibility to manage the information which they may pass on to the farmers. Mr. Victor Alegria (BNE Trust) mentioned that based on his research on the fate and transport of chemicals, he would consider BAHA to be an important entity as they hold a lot of data on chemicals in Belize.
- Mr. Cansino (DOE) as well as Mr. Alegria (DOE) expressed their concerns at the number of people suggested as potential members for the committee and stated that this may be a deterrent for the efficient functioning of the committee. He further stated that the involvement of some ministries such as the Ministry of Transport and the Ministry of National Security, though important, should be limited to when they are needed. He added that the driving forces should be the Ministry of Labour, the University of Belize and the Customs and Excise Department. Other participants should be included as the need arises. Dr. Dhaniram (BCRC-Caribbean) assured the participants that the ministries and agencies were suggestions, but their

inclusion would depend on the willingness of the individual or agency to actually commit as well as who the stakeholders believe would be the best representation for the National Chemical Committee.

- Mr. Cansino (DOE) stated that the NGOs in Belize are more focused on conservation and a link between the impact of chemicals and conservation needs to be created. He also stated that the participation of NGOs is limited because their interest lies in the expansion of protected areas and is not focused on chemicals management. Dr. Dhaniram (BCRC-Caribbean) inquired about a specific NGO's involvement in environmental education and outreach programmes as it relates to chemicals, as stated on their website. Mr. Cansino (DOE) stated that he did work with that organization but to his recollection, environmental education was targeted for secondary school students and excluded research.
- Dr. Khan (BCRC-Caribbean) proposed a rearrangement of the diagram to distinguish between the core ministries and those on the second tier to which everyone agreed. The core ministries and agencies were identified as the DOE, PCB, BAHA, Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour, Customs and Excise Department and the National Emergency Management Organisation.
- Mr. Recimos (Customs and Excise Department) commented that there should be representatives from the different stakeholder groups to form the National Chemical Committee and not individuals. He suggested that the diagram should be redone with the necessary changes before it is distributed for further adjustments.
- Mr. Recimos (Customs and Excise Department) commented that the services and tourism sectors contribute approximately 40% towards the country's GDP. He reiterated the need to include the tourism sector in chemical management because of the amount of chemicals used. He further stated that it is important to know how the chemicals are used, disposed, stored and transported. He added that members from the Belize Tourism Industry Association should also be included because they form part of the tourism structure.
- Dr. Khan (BCRC-Caribbean) mentioned that data on chemicals and hazardous wastes are not structured collectively and therefore extensive searches are required to obtain data through general databases. He emphasized the need for future reporting to have a structure for the recording of chemicals.

Mr. Cansino (DOE) thanked the BCRC-Caribbean for the very informative presentations and stated that the goal of the updated National Chemical Profile is to build or strengthen existing systems. He added that the fate, transport and negative implications of chemicals on humans and animals within the environment after their useful lives justified the need for the sound management of chemicals in Belize. The workshop was then opened for discussion.

Open Forum

- Ms. Serrut (PCB) stated that she has been in the field of chemicals management for many years and has seen no change to date, in proper use practices of chemicals. She added that competency based training on the correct use of chemicals using practical activities is required as well as the publicizing of data to reveal the severity of negative impacts linked to the use of

the chemicals. The duplication of initiatives or committees was highlighted and it was suggested that there be an integration of efforts. She recommended that citizens or private organizations should not depend on Governments to deal with such issues but work together amongst themselves.

- Mr. Alegria (DOE) recognized there were two levels of coordination pertaining to chemicals management; policy/legislative/institutional /capacity building and the implementation of the existing technical issues. He further commented on the Government's desire to have integrated efforts among agencies and ministries, as opposed to the creation of new and independent organizations to fulfill the same/similar tasks.
- Dr. Khan (BCRC-Caribbean) stated that duplication of responsibilities and tasks is not limited to Belize but extends to each of the Caribbean countries. He suggested that there should be an opportunity to execute the coordination of chemicals management which obeys the two level systems as explained by Mr. Alegria (DOE). Dr. Khan (BCRC-Caribbean) added that statistics have been used in other countries to show a link between the use of chemicals and the potential impacts on human health and the environment. Dr. Khan (BCRC-Caribbean) encouraged the participants to follow what is done in other countries and use the data to assist in the sensitization of the public to the issues and effects of chemicals management. Mr. Alegria (DOE) agreed with the sentiments shared by Dr. Khan (BCRC-Caribbean) and shared some of Belize's efforts to accomplish this.
- Mr. Bodden (Ministry of Health) identified research as a key element to support and influence the activities relating to chemicals management. He stated that the capacity of the university should be examined in order to make the necessary improvements to build and drive positive actions towards chemical management. He supported these views to utilize research conducted because much data already exist. Mr. Bodden (Ministry of Health) added that a lot of the current data are for agriculture purposes and further research should be done to link the ecological and environmental impacts of chemicals to their impacts on human health. He stated that an economic value should be attributed to the negative impacts on human health since awareness and sensitization are increased when people's finances are affected.
- Mr. Recimos (Customs and Excise Department) shared the measures taken to modernize the Customs and Excise Department which changed from the examination of all goods, to a more systematic approach in which information is used beforehand to assist in the checking of goods. He stated that through the Kyoto convention, the Customs and Excise Department was expected to have transparency with respect to their activities. He added that the management of chemicals should be prioritized in terms of high or low risk.
- Mr. Alegria (DOE) stated that data collection was important in the enforcement of chemical laws because it gives a strong support to their cause and would justify the decisions especially pertaining to importers who may be considered influential and 'untouchable'.
- Dr. Khan (BCRC-Caribbean) commented that there are international databases which freely provide information on chemicals and emphasized the need for the Caribbean region to follow instead of limiting the type of data which can be attained and the ease at which it can be done. Mr. Alegria (DOE) stated that the main issue is the tracking of chemicals used within the private

sector. He suggested the use of a computerized system to assist in the monitoring of these chemicals.

CLOSING REMARKS

Mr. Cansino (DOE) gave a very brief overview of the Seminar making mention of the importance of managing chemicals in Belize. He then thanked the participants for attending the National Follow-up Seminar and for their contributing towards the project.

NEXT STEP FORWARD

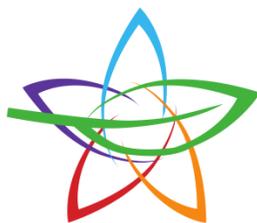
In accordance with the small scale funding agreement, upon completion of the national follow-up seminar, the next steps forward include:

- the designation of responsibilities to personnel within each country in order to continue the activities initiated by the project and to develop ideas for future tools and mechanisms for the improvement of industrial chemicals management infrastructure and activities;
- the development of strategies to raise awareness on risks and issues associated with industrial chemicals;
- the design and implementation of adequate legal and administrative frameworks and institutions for the improvement of industrial chemicals management within each country so as to satisfy the obligations of the Rotterdam Convention and other MEAs;
- the networking among peers in the region to facilitate the sustainability of discussion post workshop; and
- the submission of progress, financial and final reports on the workshop and the follow-up seminar based on the activities of the Programme for each of the pilot countries as indicated in clause no. 7 of the Agreement.

ANNEX I

NATIONAL FOLLOW-UP SEMINAR

FINAL AGENDA



**National Follow-Up Seminar on Industrial Chemicals under the
Rotterdam Convention for the Caribbean Sub-Region**

30th July 2015

BEST WESTERN Biltmore Hotel

Belize City, Belize

FINAL AGENDA		
8:30 – 9:00	Registration of Participants	
9:00 – 9:05	Welcome and Call to Order	Mr. Martin Alegria, Department of Environment, Belize
9:05 – 9:10	Safety Briefing	Best Western Biltmore Hotel
9:10 – 9:20	Opening Remarks	Mr. Martin Alegria, Department of Environment, Belize
9:20-9:30	Opening Remarks	Dr. Ahmad Khan, Director, BCRC-Caribbean
9:30 – 9:40	Opening Remarks	Alexander Mangwiro, BRS Secretariat
9:40 – 10:00	Introduction of Participants	Participants
10:00 – 10:30	<i>Coffee Break & Group Photo</i>	
10:45-11:00	Sound Management of Industrial Chemicals Programme Overview	Dr. Ahmad A. Khan, Director, BCRC-Caribbean
11:00 – 11:30	National Chemical Profile Update Belize - Findings	Dr. Danelle Dhaniram, Research Analyst, BCRC-Caribbean
11:30 – 12:00	National Framework Development for the Management of Industrial Chemicals	
12:00 – 12:30	<i>Open Forum Discussion</i>	
12:30 – 13:30	<i>Lunch</i>	

ANNEX II

NATIONAL FOLLOW-UP SEMINAR

OFFICIAL PARTICIPANT LIST



National Follow-Up Seminar on Industrial Chemicals under the Rotterdam Convention for the Caribbean Sub-Region

30th July 2015

BEST WESTERN Biltmore Hotel

Belize City, Belize

OFFICIAL PARTICIPANT LIST

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