

Rotterdam Convention Bureau teleconference

Wednesday 23 May, 15.00- 16.00

Participants: Ms. Magdalena Balicka, (COP President – CEE), Mr. Mohammed Khashashneh (Asia Pacific) and Ms. Christina Charlotte Tolfsen (WEOG)

Secretariat: Ms. Christine Fuell (FAO), Mr. Frank Moser (UNEP), Mr. Hamoudi Shubber (UNEP) and Mr. Jim Willis (Executive Secretary - UNEP)

- The President welcomed other Bureau members and outlined that the purpose of the call was to discuss the Executive Secretary's proposal to hold back-to-back the ordinary and extraordinary meetings of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conferences of the parties (COPs and ExCOPs) in Geneva from 28 April to 10 May 2013. She recalled that the COP Presidents, following their meeting on 9 May 2012 in Geneva, consulted electronically with Bureau members of the three conventions and requested their agreement to this proposal by 1 June 2012.
- In his overview of his proposal, the Executive Secretary recalled that the 2011 synergies decisions called for the coordination of meetings of the three conventions' COPs in 2013 and the organization of an ExCOPs back-to-back to and at the same venue of the last ordinary COP. He also reminded members that, although the Rotterdam COP had agreed to hold its next meeting in Rome, its Bureau had the discretion to decide otherwise. With regard to the proposal, the Executive Secretary noted that its aim was not only to save costs but primarily to increase effective and coherent decision making on policy, technical and budget matters among the three conventions. The financial benefits from the joint organization are estimated between 1.2 and 1.5 million USD and could be used for technical assistance activities that parties would deem appropriate. Among the operational benefits of having back-to-back meetings would be the exchange of experience and cross fertilization of ideas on topics normally discussed separately by each convention, such as technical assistance, financial issues and compliance. The proposal would also allow for the scheduling of a high-level segment, if desired by the parties. The Executive Secretary noted that the secretariat would engage in raising funds for the participation of up to three representatives for each eligible party and that it had already received positive indication from donors that funding for this purpose could be made available.
- The Executive Secretary informed Bureau members of the views expressed by members of the Stockholm Convention Bureau, who had met from 10 to 11 May 2012 in Geneva. The Stockholm Bureau had received the proposal positively and asked for the development of a document that would describe the actual organization of the meetings, with more details on the schedule and running of the three COPs and ExCOPs.
- Participants in the teleconference expressed support for the proposal. There was agreement that detailed planning and organization, as well as coordination between the bureaux, would be essential. They noted that some countries within their region had already provided comments and were supportive of the proposal. However, some parties had expressed concerns that small delegations may have difficulties in taking part in all meetings if the number of contact groups was not limited. Participants agreed that these concerns should be taken into account while planning the organization of two weeks back-to-back meeting. Also discussed was the idea of making effective use of savings from synergies for technical assistance, including the possibility of supporting national coordination in a similar way to arrangements under the Montreal Protocol, and it was mentioned that the inclusion of the forthcoming mercury convention to the synergy process was also an issue under consideration.
- Participants asked the Executive Secretary to also make available to the members of the Rotterdam Bureau the document on the organization of work of the COPs and ExCOPs that is developed by the Secretariat for the Stockholm Bureau. It was suggested that the document would be forwarded to Bureau members before the 1st of June. It was also agreed that a concept note on the high-level segment, including costs and benefits, would be developed by the Secretariat at a later stage.
- The President closed the teleconference and reminded Bureau members that they have until 1 June 2012 to provide their views on the proposal.