



Rotterdam Convention Secretariat

Progress report

(January - October 2009)

This progress report describes the work of the Rotterdam Convention Secretariat towards the implementation of mandated activities for the period 2009-2011.

Key guiding principles for the planning and implementation of activities during the current triennium (January 2009-June 2011) include:

- A strong focus on synergies between the Basel and Stockholm Conventions and SAICM for the planning and implementation of activities as well as supporting synergies at the national level by involving national focal points of the Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions in technical assistance activities delivered by the three secretariats;
- The joint development and delivery of activities in partnership with relevant partner organizations and institutions;
- A strong focus on regional delivery of technical assistance by engaging existing regional Basel and Stockholm Convention Centers as well as UNEP and FAO centers in activities developed by the Secretariat.

The activities in this progress report are included in the Programme of Work 2009-2011 as adopted by the COP-4 and are organized in key categories (some of which were identified as priority areas by the COP):

1. Resource Kit
2. Training and awareness-raising meetings
3. National and subregional planning meetings
4. Trade related issues
5. Development of a monitoring programme on severely hazardous pesticides formulations
6. Resource mobilization
7. Support to the preparation of notifications of final regulatory action
8. Working with customs authorities
9. Fostering cooperation
10. Follow-up to the synergies decision
11. Working directly with individual countries on specific issues
12. Working on industrial chemicals
13. Establishment of a joint Clearing House Mechanism
14. Partners in the regional delivery of technical assistance

1. Resource Kit - review, update and translate, print and disseminate (priority area)

In 2009, the Secretariat continued to update the resource kit to reflect experience acquired in its use. A number of new documents and a new poster were developed. Other existing documents such as the Convention text, the three Conventions brochure, the Stepwise Guide, the Overview booklet, the PIC companion guide, the DNA guidance, the PIC Circular user guide and a Training Manual were revised and reprinted. Good progress was made in translating documents such as the Convention Overview into all six official languages of the United Nations.

The prototype of the e-learning CD programme on the key operational elements of the Convention was widely distributed to all major stakeholders in 2009. It was field tested and is being revised and will then be translated and made available in French and Spanish as well. The CD facilitates continuous and self-directed training at the national level to meet the challenges that arise from frequent changes in the designated national authorities in some countries.

Section E of the resource kit, on cross-cutting issues, is designed to provide guidance on how the work of the Convention could be integrated into the activities undertaken 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. This section was refined in 2009 and expanded to reflect new information.

2. Training and awareness raising workshops (priority area)

The secretariat developed a training and awareness raising programme on the implementation of the Rotterdam Convention. Sub-regional training and awareness-raising meetings are proposed for Parties that experience difficulties in meeting their basic obligations under the Convention, in order that they might fully benefit from the Convention and its activities. These meetings provide practical training on the Convention's key operational elements including practical training in preparing and submitting of notifications of Final Regulatory Actions. It promotes synergies on national level among the national authorities of the three Conventions (Rotterdam, Stockholm and Basel Conventions) and highlights opportunities for an integrated approach to implementation, along with other relevant international activities such SAICM. It includes case studies and discussions in small groups on: the preparation and submission of notifications of final regulatory actions; review of decision guidance documents and preparation and submission of import responses; review and completion of the incident report form for severely hazardous pesticide formulations; and an exercise on export notification.

Parties that have a low level of import responses, in addition to having experienced difficulties in submitting notifications of final regulatory action and changes in designated national authorities were invited to express interest in attending such a workshop.

For 2009, the Secretariat has organized three sub-regional training and awareness raising workshops for eight Francophone African countries, nine Anglophone African countries, and seven eastern European and Asian countries. In organizing these workshops, the Secretariat made use of existing Basel Centers and FAO Regional Offices. The FAO Regional Office in Accra made local arrangements for the work shop in Accra, and the Basel Convention Technical Centre in Pretoria offered to assist with local arrangements for the training workshop back-to back with a regional synergies workshop on the three Conventions, thereby maximizing the benefits for countries and simultaneously reducing the costs of the individual workshops.

It is proposed to convene two further sub-regional training and awareness raising meetings in 2010 in the South Asia and Pacific regions.

3. Planning meetings

National and subregional planning meetings have the objective to provide Parties with an opportunity to identify the elements of a national plan or a strategy for the implementation of the Rotterdam Convention. Participants represent key players in the implementation of the Rotterdam Convention, such as the Designated National Authorities (DNAs) under the PIC procedure, as

well as representatives from Ministries which have a role in the implementation of the Convention such as Agriculture, Environment, Health, Customs Control or Foreign Affairs. Such a broad participation provides the basis for developing a plan which includes consideration of synergies in national implementation of SAICM and the Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions.

Since its initiation in 2005, the programme has provided forty-six Parties with the opportunity to develop a national plan, set priorities and assign time lines and responsibilities.

In 2009, two National Action Planning consultations will take place in cooperation with UNITAR. One was held in June 2009 in Togo, and another planning meeting is scheduled for the end of 2009 in Namibia.

National Follow-up seminars: In cooperation with the FAO regional Officers, national seminars were convened for Parties that had participated in the sub-regional planning meetings held in 2007-2008. The national seminars provide an opportunity to seek broader support for the national implementation plans, to review the status of implementation of the plans and to consider further country needs and priorities.

A total of four national seminars were held in 2009 in Gabon, the Democratic Republic of Congo, in Belize and El Salvador. One more national follow-up seminar was requested by the United Arab Emirates for November 2009.

4. Trade related issues (priority area)

The Secretariat developed a concept for a workshop with the overall objective of promoting a shared responsibility in the implementation and enforcement of the trade related provisions of the Rotterdam Convention by facilitating a dialogue among exporting parties and trade partners.

The Secretariat convened, for representatives of the European Community and selected trade partners, such a trade partner meeting from 22-26 June 2009 in Cyprus. Representatives from the European Commission, France, Germany, India, Iran, Netherlands, Peru, Poland, Spain, Sudan, Ukraine, United Kingdom, and Venezuela attended the meeting.

Participants reviewed the current operational procedures in the countries present and received feedback from the perspective of their trade partners as to what was working well, what might be improved and how. Several break-out groups were held to provide a forum for discussions based on case examples of actual occurrences submitted by participants. These opportunities for discussion were met with an open, cooperative spirit among the participants. The workshop resulted in the identification of issues that were country-specific as well as common across countries and follow up actions were proposed for the short, medium and long term.

A second similar trade partners meeting will be convened from 19-22 October 2009 in Nanjing, China, for China and some major trading partners (Brazil, Pakistan, South Africa, Thailand and Viet Nam). This trade partner meeting is a follow-up to a National Thematic Meeting on Trade Related Issues under the Rotterdam Convention that was held in October 2007 in Hang Zhou, China.

5. Development of a monitoring programme on severely hazardous pesticides formulations (priority area)

The Secretariat developed activities targeted at developing monitoring programmes on severely hazardous pesticides formulations (SHPF). The overall objective of this activity is to support countries in improving capacities for the collection of information about health problems caused by SHPF under the conditions of use in order to assist countries to submit proposals under the Rotterdam Convention.

Broader Programme on severely hazardous pesticides formulations: A broader programme on SHPF is being developed by the Secretariat. The programme will establish links between

individual activities such as the FAO programme on Highly Hazardous Pesticides, WHO's work on Poison Control and the work under the Rotterdam Convention. The elements of the programme will cover awareness raising and preparation of relevant documents, and will address different layers of key players in reporting SHPF in order to address the bottlenecks in proposing severely hazardous pesticide formulations. Further elements of the broader programme on SHPF are individual activities with Parties that have requested assistance, and the development of a resource or tool kit to provide background documentation that can serve for awareness raising, planning and implementing activities related to severely hazardous pesticide formulations.

National programme to monitor severely hazardous pesticides formulations: Under a Letter of Agreement with the Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention and the Pesticide Action Network-UK (PAN-UK), a second phase of a project on monitoring and reporting SHPFs was initiated in 2009 in Tanzania and Togo. The community health monitoring pilot programmes in the two countries are being carried out in autumn 2009 and will have established by the end of 2009, in two pilot regions in each of the two countries, a process for monitoring and reporting pesticide incidents.

The Secretariat, in close cooperation with the WHO, has implemented in 2009 a Joint Project in Tanzania and Ghana to Improve Capacities for the Identification of SHPF under the Rotterdam Convention.

An inception workshop for both countries was convened from 24 to 26 June 2009 in Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. Some 30 participants from Ghana and Tanzania attended the meeting, representing a wide range of key stakeholders including relevant Ministries, NGOs, WHO and FAO. The workshop resulted in national plans for the implementation of a data collection project in each country, including plans for the development of methodologies and tools for the data collection, analysis and evaluation, identification of the data to be collected, who will collect it, how it will be collected, what data collection tools will be used and what institutional mechanisms will be needed. Training needs and the need to develop training materials were identified. The country activities will conclude with a short national meeting where results will be presented and possible next steps discussed.

Resource/tool kit on severely hazardous pesticides formulations: The Secretariat has initiated the development of a set of documents on SHPF that, once available, will assist national authorities in developing countries in monitoring and reporting pesticide incidents under Article 6 of the Convention. The toolkit will be based on documentation developed in the pilot countries (Ghana, Tanzania, Togo, and Ecuador) and will take into consideration tools developed by Partners such as WHO, FAO, PAN, other countries and other NGOs. Once ready, the toolkit will provide a useful tool to other countries.

The resource/tool kit would contain a few essential documents that are already available with the Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention (SHPF form and instructions), other documents that were developed by local NGOs and Designated National Authorities of Tanzania and Togo under co-ordination of PAN-UK, and WHO handbooks, guidance documents and other useful information. A number of additional documents will need to be developed, taking into consideration the existing ones, possibly including topics such as guidance on incident report forms; monitoring of SHPF; pesticide incidents; data collection methodologies, sources and planning of data collection projects; case studies.

6. Resource Mobilization (priority area)

COP-4 requested the Secretariat to organize a series of workshops to provide support to Parties so that they can successfully access financial resources required to implement the Rotterdam Convention. The Secretariat is working together with UNITAR, with the Stockholm and Basel Conventions and with SAICM on the planning and delivery of workshops and guidance materials which will assist Parties in accessing resources necessary for the implementation of the chemicals conventions. Guidance materials might include the development of standard SAICM

project formats incorporating generic provisions of the Convention. The Secretariat continues to work with the UNEP resource mobilization unit in linking relevant priority areas of the programme of work of the Convention with UNEP's Programme of Work on harmful substances and hazardous wastes.

7. Support to the preparation of notifications of final regulatory action (priority area)

These activities are intended to build the capacity of developing country Parties to prepare and submit complete notifications of final regulatory action that are subject to the scrutiny of the Chemical Review Committee.

CRC Experts Training: The Chemical Review Committee (CRC) is composed of 31 experts from different regions. The Secretariat will conduct a workshop for CRC experts to increase their awareness of the functioning, procedures and review mechanisms of the CRC to enable Parties to make informed decisions about chemicals being submitted to CRC. A successful process for the review of notifications of final regulatory action and a better understanding by countries of what is needed will improve the functioning of the Convention's mechanisms. The Secretariat's training will involve the use of practical, hands-on and technical material; experienced experts will share their knowledge and address concerns; the workshop is also intended to prepare experts for discussions at the CRC meeting (March 2010). The workshop will take place in early December 2009 in Budapest.

CRC/POPRC Training: The Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions chemical review committees (POPRC and CRC) have very similar structures and similar mandates. Under the synergies process, the two Secretariats will jointly raise awareness on the functions and operation of the two committees. Better informed stakeholders, particularly national authorities are essential for the successful submissions of candidate chemicals which meet the requirements for consideration by the review committees of the two conventions. The two Secretariats are in the process of organizing a workshop in the African region that will ultimately support an increase in the number of chemicals listed under the annexes of the two conventions. The workshop will consist of joint and separate sessions for the RC and SC and will provide learning opportunities and experience sharing among the stakeholders and experts. The workshop will be held at the end of November 2009 in Egypt. Another workshop is foreseen to take place in January 2010 for the GRULAC region.

Consultations with Parties to increase the submission of notifications: The Secretariat intends to conduct a series of consultations with Parties to encourage them to increase the number of notifications submitted to the Secretariat, especially on industrial chemicals - in particular on chemicals which are or have recently been considered under the Stockholm Convention.

8. Working with customs authorities (priority area)

Another priority area approved at COP-4 is the need to support Parties on customs-related activities relevant to the Rotterdam Convention:

Capacity building for customs authorities: The Secretariat has been actively involved in the delivery of a number of training workshops in conjunction with the World Customs Organization (WCO) and with the Green Customs Initiative (GCI), of which the Secretariat is a partner. During 2009, the Secretariat contributed to customs training workshops held in India, Nigeria, Mongolia, Qatar, Budapest and Kenya. The Secretariat's involvement in these workshops supported training the customs officials and helped increase the profile of the RC and its work. During the period 2009-2011, the Secretariat's participation in more workshops is foreseen. Also, the Secretariat has joined the WCO's newly established 'ENVIRONET' network for border protection and is also a partner in the activities by the Multilateral Environmental Agreements-Regional Enforcement Network (MEA-REN). These networks aim at promoting integrated regional cooperation for the control of transboundary movement of chemicals.

Working with the WCO on Harmonized System (HS) codes: The Secretariat continues to work with the WCO on the assignment of HS codes to Annex III chemicals. These codes are a major international tool for the control of chemicals at the borders.

Working with UNITAR on GHS: The *Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals* (GHS) is a system for standardizing and harmonizing the classification and labelling of chemicals. It provides a comprehensive approach to defining hazards of chemicals, creating classification processes and communicating hazard information, as well as protective measures, on labels and Safety Data Sheets (SDS). The GHS is another important tool for the control of trade in hazardous chemicals. The Secretariat is collaborating with UNITAR on the development of joint capacity building activities to support the existing GHS UNITAR training programme as well as the joint development of related tools.

Customs materials currently being developed by the Secretariat include:

- Brochure on HS codes (in the process of translation)
- Brochure on chemicals common to the 3 conventions (with the designer)
- Rotterdam Convention specific chemicals brochure (under development)
- Green Customs Guide which contains a section on the Rotterdam Convention
- Brochure on the environmental effects of chemicals across the 3 chemicals Conventions (under development)
- Customs Toolkit relevant to the Rotterdam Convention (under development)
- Customs specific section on the Rotterdam Convention website

9. Fostering cooperation among designated national authorities

The Secretariat continued delivery of sub-regional meetings between designated national authorities (DNAs). Such meetings provide an opportunity for DNAs to review progress in the implementation of the Convention, identify common problems and share experience in finding solutions. A key element of the meeting is the opportunity offered to identify opportunities for regional co-operation and with authorities of the Stockholm and Basel Conventions and SAICM.

One subregional meeting for designated national authorities from Central American countries (Belize, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Venezuela) was convened from 1-5 December 2008 in Panamá.

10. Follow-up to the synergies decision

The Secretariat is already implementing the synergies decision across most of its activities, i.e. planning and delivery of capacity building, project development, approaches to donors, coordination on technical and scientific issues, regional delivery, etc., in particular in the areas of industrial chemicals, working with customs authorities, clearing house mechanism, resource mobilization and supporting Parties with the preparation of notifications.

Extraordinary COPs: In collaboration with the Rotterdam Convention Bureau, the Secretariat is actively contributing to the preparations of the First Simultaneous Extraordinary Meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions on enhancing cooperation and coordination, scheduled to take place in Bali, Indonesia, 22–26 February 2010. The website address for the meetings is: <http://excops.unep.ch/>

Regional synergies workshops: A series of regional synergies workshops are being organized jointly with the Secretariats of the Basel and Stockholm Conventions to enhance cooperation and collaboration to facilitate joint implementation of the three Conventions at the national level. The emphasis is placed on identifying synergies and linkages at the national level as a way to foster compliance with the Conventions' requirements. Consideration will also be given to opportunities for technical and financial assistance when implementing the Conventions in a coordinated

manner. The first synergies workshop will be held in October 2009 in Pretoria, South Africa and two other regional workshops are foreseen in 2009-2010.

Regional synergies programmes: The Secretariat is supporting the development of specific regional and national programmes for the joint implementation of the three Conventions at the national and regional levels, in close cooperation with the Basel and Stockholm Conventions.

11. Working directly with individual countries on specific issues (priority area)

The way in which the specific needs of individual Parties will be addressed depends on the issue of concern and the Parties involved. The current technical assistance activities of the Secretariat in this area include:

- Support to new Parties to raise awareness of the Convention;
- Specific assistance to Parties in response to their requests.

12. Working on industrial chemicals (priority area)

At COP-4, Parties requested the Secretariat to develop a programme for the sound management of industrial chemicals and stressed the importance of providing technical assistance to Parties to safely manage industrial chemicals. The Secretariat has been working on the following items related to industrial chemicals:

Roadmap on industrial chemicals: A draft strategy on industrial chemicals is in the process of being developed in collaboration with the Stockholm and Basel Conventions. This strategy provides a 'roadmap' for the implementation of an integrated programme on industrial chemicals and also addresses the technical assistance components on industrial chemicals mandated by COP-4.

The above-mentioned roadmap on industrial chemicals addresses 4 key pillars:

- i. Awareness-raising on industrial chemicals management and information exchange on the Rotterdam Convention and other relevant chemicals MEAs (Basel Convention, Stockholm Convention, SAICM, Montreal Protocol etc.);
- ii. Building national capacity for performing risk assessments;
- iii. Building national capacities for developing and implementing risk management measures (development/strengthening of national legislation and policies for the sound management of industrial chemicals);
- iv. Knowledge development at the national and regional levels;

Industrial chemicals in the Asia Pacific region: The Secretariat is implementing a project in collaboration with WHO, ILO and other partners to support the sound management of industrial chemicals in the Asia and Pacific region, with a special emphasis on asbestos. WHO's risk assessment toolkit as well as other relevant guidance materials addressing health and environmental aspects will support a series of workshops envisaged for 2010.

Industrial chemicals in the Africa and LAC regions: Two regional awareness-raising workshops on industrial chemicals are being jointly organized with SAICM, WHO and the Secretariat for early 2010 for the Africa and Latin American region. These workshops are intended to support the sound management of industrial chemicals.

Synergies on industrial chemicals: The Secretariat is working together with the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions on increasing regional and national capacity to safely manage hazardous industrial chemicals. The three Secretariats have jointly developed a project proposal, for consideration for funding and collaborative implementation with the World Bank. The proposal includes the delivery of technical assistance, the development of relevant materials, knowledge sharing and monitoring and evaluation.

Information to support the sound management of industrial chemicals: The Secretariat is developing a document for Parties to support the sound management of industrial chemicals. This document will provide Parties with some key elements to address industrial chemicals at the national level and address synergies on industrial chemicals between the three conventions and SAICM.

WHO's Risk Assessment Toolkit: The Secretariat is collaborating with the WHO on the development of a risk assessment toolkit that will help developing countries in their risk assessment efforts related to hazardous chemicals. The toolkit provides information, flowcharts and case studies on risk assessment methodology and includes a section on the Rotterdam Convention. The draft toolkit is already being utilized in the delivery of technical assistance activities on risk assessments, which are being organized in collaboration with WHO. Risk assessment experts from China, Malaysia and Thailand will be testing the toolkit to tailor it to a more user-friendly and efficient format and content, along with support from the Rotterdam Convention Secretariat and an expert working group. The first meeting on the preparatory phase to test the toolkit took place in July in Bangkok, Thailand. The next meeting for the testing phase of the toolkit will take place in October 2009. Once ready, the toolkit will provide a useful tool to raise awareness on chemicals' related risks and how to assess them and will also be one of the major tools of the Secretariat's industrial chemicals programme.

Legal framework on industrial chemicals: The Secretariat is developing a new area of work that requires the strengthening of capacity building activities (priority area 7) in order to assist Parties with the implementation of an adequate legal and administrative framework to support the sound management of industrial chemicals. To that purpose, the Secretariat is working in close cooperation with UNEP's Division on Environmental Law and Conventions (DELIC) on: i) the inclusion of the RC in DELIC's training curricula on environmental law; and ii) the development of guidance to Parties concerning the legal and administrative infrastructures required to safely manage industrial chemicals.

13. Establishment of a joint clearing house mechanism (priority area)

COP-4 approved two new priority areas which relate to the establishment of, and training on a Clearing House Mechanism for the Rotterdam Convention, in cooperation with the Stockholm and Basel Conventions. In addition, the synergies decision *on enhancing cooperation and coordination among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions* requested the three Secretariats to develop, inter alia, systems of information exchange on health and environmental impacts, including a Clearing House Mechanism, with the aim of these systems serving all three conventions.

The Secretariat is currently working with the Secretariats of the Basel and Stockholm Conventions on the following activities in response to the above-mentioned decisions:

Development of a strategy for a clearing house mechanism (CHM): A strategy setting out short, medium and long term goals has been developed and discussed with the Stockholm and Basel Convention Secretariats. This plan constitutes the basis for the activities of the programme from the Rotterdam Convention's position, to be implemented in cooperation with the Basel and Stockholm Conventions.

Development of a common work plan: On activities relating to the implementation of systems of information exchange on health and environmental impacts, including a Clearing House Mechanism for the three conventions, a common workplan is under preparation and will be presented at the simultaneous Extraordinary Conference of the Parties Meetings for the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions in Bali, Indonesia, from 22 to 26 February 2010.

Development of CHM Prototypes: The design and development of the future Clearing House Mechanism has been initiated:

- A prototype central portal for the future Clearing House Mechanism is being designed;

- A prototype Import Country Response module is being developed to assist and better equip Parties to submit Import Responses on chemicals subject to the PIC procedure. It will be operational for pilot testing in November 2009;
- A prototype Focal Points module is being developed aiming to improve the access to, and management of, national Focal Points contact information for the Rotterdam Convention. It will be operational for pilot testing in November 2009. Further development is planned to include access to, and management of, similar data for the Basel and Stockholm Conventions.

Pioneering pilot workshop on the CHM Prototypes: Preparations are ongoing for the delivery of a pioneering pilot workshop in Armenia in November 2009 on the aforementioned prototype modules of the Convention's clearing-house central portal. This pilot training session is designed for Designated National Authorities (DNAs) and other stakeholders and is being organized in conjunction with the training and awareness workshop. The meeting will be attended by representatives of 8 countries from the region.

Further developments for the Extraordinary-COPs: A demonstration of progress made on the joint activities regarding the development of systems of information exchange of the three Conventions is planned to be presented at the simultaneous Extraordinary Conference of the Parties Meetings for the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions in Bali, Indonesia, from 22 to 26 February 2010.

14. Partners in the regional delivery of technical assistance

FAO and UNEP regional offices: As approved at COP-4, the Secretariat convened an annual meeting for Regional and Sub-regional Officers with the objective to review progress in 2008 and assist in the preparation of planning activities for 2009. The meeting, held from 23 to 24 February 2009 in Rome, Italy, was attended by 13 regional and sub-regional officers.

A further meeting for FAO and UNEP regional offices is proposed for 2010 to review progress in 2009 and develop further ideas for meeting the countries' technical assistance needs in preparation of the fifth meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Asia Pacific Plant Protection Commission: The 26th session of the Asia Pacific Plant Protection Commission took place from 30 August to 4 September 2009. In follow-up to the work initiated in 2005, participation in the meeting of regional experts and a limited number of designated national authorities from representative member countries promoted the inclusion of the Rotterdam Convention in the work programme of the Commission. A presentation was given in plenary. The Standing Committee on Pesticides discussed issues related to ratification and implementation on the Rotterdam Convention. The Committee called upon Governments to continue efforts to ratify and implement the Rotterdam Convention.

African Pesticide Regulators Consultation: The Third Consultation of African Pesticide Regulators was convened from 9-11 June 2009, in Pretoria, South Africa. Some 30 participants attended the meeting. The Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention, represented by a FAO Sub-regional Officer, introduced international obligations, the relevance of the Rotterdam Convention, and the scope and objectives of the Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions. Participants discussed opportunities for linking activities into their respective national frameworks for pesticide life cycle management.

Capacity building related to MEAs in ACP countries: The Secretariat is currently working with the Secretariats of the Basel and Stockholm Conventions to support the implementation of the European Commission's MEA Programme for African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries. This European Union (EU) funded 21 million euro four-year capacity enhancement programme aims to address one of the central issues currently facing the international environmental community: the implementation of MEAs. Having become Parties to numerous MEAs, many

African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries face the enormous challenge of implementing their obligations. The Secretariat communicated priority areas approved at COP-4 to the ACP regional hubs and invited the hubs to incorporate these priorities in the development of their work programmes. The Secretariat provided joint representation at a needs assessment meeting for the African Hub held in Nairobi in July 2008 (one RC staff member represented the Basel, Stockholm, and Rotterdam Conventions). The Secretariat has also (jointly with the chemicals conventions and SAICM) provided inputs to other needs assessment meetings for the African and Caribbean hubs. The Secretariat anticipates continued participating through joint representation in upcoming meetings relevant to the EC MEA Programme.

EC-ACP Pesticide Management programme: An EC-FAO Contribution Agreement for Capacity Building Related to Management of Pesticides in African, Caribbean and Pacific Countries (EC-ACP Pesticide Programme) began its inception in March 2009. The agreement includes work with the regional hubs of SPREP, CARICOM and the AU. The project is managed by the FAO's Obsolete Pesticide Programme in Rome.

The Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention explored opportunities for working with the EC-ACP Pesticide Programme in planning activities that would support the implementation of the Rotterdam Convention at the regional and national level, and explored further opportunities for cooperation/collaboration with the EC-ACP project.

The Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention contacted countries participating in the EC-ACP Pesticide Programme and brought to their attention the opportunity to propose implementation of the Rotterdam Convention as one element in the EC-ACP Pesticide Management programme.

A number of countries have flagged the need to cooperate in specific areas, such as developing a legal base for pesticide management, information exchange, work with customs authorities and work on pesticide poisoning.

The Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention provided advice during the inception phase regarding integration of the Convention into the Pesticide Programme, with a view to ensure that during the implementation phase between 2009 and 2012 there is technical support from the Secretariat and that activities are linked to the Rotterdam Convention. The project will draw upon expertise and collaborate with the Secretariat of the Rotterdam Convention on specific activities, such as pesticide poisoning in Syria and Cameroon.