

Three Conventions – One Location?

Three international Conventions regulate the handling of hazardous chemicals and hazardous wastes. The secretariats of all three are currently located in Geneva and in future could operate more strongly from a joint base:

1. The **Basel Convention** on the control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal (see Fact sheet 1).
2. The **Stockholm Convention** on persistent organic pollutants (POPs). It focuses on twelve toxic and extremely persistent organic pollutants, including the pesticide DDT, polychlorinated dioxins (a by-product from incineration processes), and PCBs. The Stockholm Convention contains the following commitments:
 - The production, use and trade in the twelve most hazardous POPs are prohibited.
 - New facilities must be built in a way to avoid the production of POPs.
 - Stockpiles and wastes contaminated with POPs should be recorded in an inventory and disposed of in an environmentally sound manner.

The Convention enters into force as soon as it has been ratified by 50 member states.

3. In the **Rotterdam Convention** on the trade in hazardous chemicals (PIC) the contracting parties commit themselves to:
 - Inform each other when they impose new bans or restrictions on chemicals, inform the recipient when they export chemicals which are subject to restrictions in their own country;
 - Strive for an official notification procedure, i.e. to collect the authorisation of the importing country in case the chemicals intended for export feature on the PIC list.

Through this notification procedure (Prior Informed Consent Procedure, PIC), which has been in place on a voluntary basis since 1989, primarily developing countries are protected from unwanted imports of hazardous substances. International negotiations on the PIC Convention were completed in 1998. The Convention will enter into force when it has been ratified by 50 countries. Switzerland ratified the Convention in January 2002.

“Chemical Cluster” in Geneva

Switzerland is campaigning for a permanent location of the Secretariats of the Stockholm (POPs) and the Rotterdam (PIC) Conventions in Geneva which are currently located there on an interim basis. The idea being to establish a competence centre for chemicals and waste (cluster) in the International Environment House in Geneva. Synergies could be optimally used as most UN and other international organisations and programmes active in environmental affairs have their main bases in Geneva:

- UNEP Chemicals
- International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS)
- Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS)
- World Health Organisation (WHO)
- World Trade Organisation (WTO)
- UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR)
- International Labour Organisation (ILO)