



Opening Speech

*by H. E. Mr. Philippe Roch, State Secretary
Director of the Swiss Agency for the Environment,
Forests and Landscape
Switzerland*

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**6th Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention
on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes
and their Disposal**

**Palais des Nations, Geneva, Switzerland
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Excellencies

Executive Secretary

Dear colleges of the Expanded Bureau

Dear delegates and friends

Strategic Plan:

Three years ago in December 1999, I was elected President of the Basel Convention. At that COP some important decisions were taken for the future of our Convention. Firstly, we gave the Basel Convention a new political vision and basis with the adoption of the Basel Ministerial Declaration on environmentally sound management. Based on this Ministerial Declaration and its mandate in decision V/33, the Expanded Bureau started to prepare a strategic plan, including an indicative work programme, for the period up to the year 2010. I must confess, that we did a good job and concluded this task, as we have now during this COP to negotiate a decision on the concrete content of this follow-up of the Ministerial Declaration and its practical implementation. As this decision will be our guidance to the Secretariat we must clearly formulate the way we want the Basel Convention to develop its activities and priorities for the next decade. In my view the following priorities are of special importance for the further development of the Basel Convention: the development of partnerships, capacity building and prevention of wastes.

Liability Protocol:

The second milestone of COP 5 was the adoption of decision V/29 or better known as the Basel Protocol on Liability and Compensation for damage resulting from the transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal. I am glad to hear, that we might now be in the position to adopt the text of Annex B to this Protocol. As a result we might solve the last open question on the best

possible manner; by fixing minimal standards of liability. Furthermore, as the text is fixed, we are all ready to take the next step, which will be to ratify it. It is my strong personal belief, that in the view of our responsibility towards future generations, we have a commitment to go ahead concerning the Basel Liability Protocol and let it enter into force as soon as possible.

Outcome of the World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg:

During the World Summit on Sustainable Development In Johannesburg, early August this year, two leading decisions were taken which are in a close context with the further development of the Basel Convention. Articles 21 and 22 of the Plan of Implementation call for a coherent and comprehensive approach to the environmentally sound management of Chemicals and hazardous wastes and thus expands the traditional international approach to wastes which was limited to transboundary movement of wastes: the WSSD made it clear that the international waste regime has also to address the sound management of wastes. Parallel to this, the Plan of Implementation further fully supports the conclusions of the IEG-process concerning the clustering of chemicals and wastes MEAs. This political statement is further strengthened by the fact, that during the second Assembly of the GEF in Beijing in October this year, the delegates decided to establish a new focal area concerning chemicals. The focus is on POPs (persistent organic pollutants), but financing in other chemicals-related areas –such as the Basel Convention- is also foreseen. An important challenge of the Basel Convention for the future must be to strongly reinforce its capacity building activities and to strengthen its co-operation with other MEAs in the respective fields of chemicals and wastes in order to keep on and to follow with the political discussions.

Partnerships:

As I am convinced, that global problems cannot be solved within the framework of a single Convention and its member states alone, I always tried during my Presidency to find partners and encourage them to work with us. Therefore Switzerland one year ago has financed a new post at the Secretariat responsible to build up new partnerships. Furthermore the Expanded Bureau started an initiative to establish an Industrial Committee in order to provide this new co-operator with guidance and input from the Member States. Unfortunately none of these two measures have been implemented yet. However, due to a strong personal initiative of the Presidency, nine world-wide leading mobile phone manufacturer will make an announcement expressing their willingness to develop a sustainable partnership with the Basel Convention and other stakeholders of the mobile phone community on the environmentally sound management of end-of-life mobile phones. Furthermore ministers will participate in a round table discussion on e-waste. These are steps in the right direction, and I sincerely hope, that other industry sectors of the economy will follow.

Africa:

When I started my new challenge as President of the Basel Convention three years ago, I declared Africa as a priority of my Presidency, and we made this priority a reality. In Rabat, Morocco, in January 01, the First Continental Conference for Africa was held and the African countries decided to face the problem of unwanted obsolete stocks of pesticides, PCBs and used oil together. The follow-up of this process was ensured by inviting the steering group of this Conference to a co-ordination meeting in June 2002 funded by the Swiss Government. The next step was, that during the AMCEN meeting early July this year in Kampala, Uganda, African Ministers decided to formally adopt the Rabat

Declaration including a programme of action. I would like to congratulate wholeheartedly my African colleagues for this big step forward, as I am convinced that the declaration together with the programme of action are crucial to solve the problems of this Continent. In this context I am really satisfied that the World Bank through the GEF and with the help of international organisations such as UNITAR, FAO and the Basel Convention together with many countries – Switzerland as well- is going to start a 15 years programme with a volume of 60 million USD in order to clean up and to dispose the stockpiles of obsolete pesticides in African countries- It is known as “the African Stockpiles program”.

Regional Centres:

As one of our priorities is the enhancement and the promoting of capacity building and technical assistance on all levels, we should strongly support the strengthening of the Basel Convention Regional Centres; unifying them with a better structure and providing them with the necessary funding to implement projects. Increased coherence with other related initiatives, such as the Cleaner Production Centres, is also a matter of urgency and a close co-operation of these centres is crucial for their success.

Quo vadis ?

Ladies and Gentlemen, the Basel Convention is at a crossroads. I strongly support the notion of a wider scope of the Basel Convention to non toxic wastes, and a strengthening of the prevention of wastes. As a follow-up to the decisions taken during the WSSD, I would strongly recommend to promote a global strategy in the fields of chemicals and the close co-operation with other MEA’s working in the chemicals and waste field. Geneva as the international centre of the waste and chemicals related Conventions is the ideal place for this , as it promotes

synergies and cost savings through an efficient co-operation between these organisations and all stakeholders involved.

When I became President three years ago, the Secretariat of the Basel Convention was in a transition phase in leadership. In the year 2001, UNEP elected Ms Sachiko Kuwabara-Yamamoto as the new Executive Secretary of the Convention. This transition phase has been difficult and a clear reason for instability in the Secretariat itself. We all know, that it is not easy to build up a strong leadership, and to create a functioning team. Therefore the Secretariat strongly needs its Member States financial support and technical input.

With these words, I would like to wish my successor only the best for his challenge.

Thank you very much for your attention and I wish you a fruitful meeting here in my beloved hometown Geneva !