

FAQs on promoting synergies among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions

1. Does the synergies process intend to make legal changes to the conventions?

The synergies process does not intend to go back and make any legal changes to the conventions. It is actually forward-looking and it is looking into how you implement the conventions in a more efficient and effective manner. Most of the attention focuses on the secretariat-organizational level to ensure that we provide a better service and more coordinated approach so that Parties can implement the conventions in a coherent manner. Of course the synergies decision has an important section on what needs to be done at the national and regional level, and these changes will take place in the near future.

2. Under the Basel Convention you have an implementation and a compliance mechanism committee: does the same exist for the Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions?

Under the Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions there is no implementation committee as such. The Rotterdam Convention has the Chemicals Review Committee, and the Stockholm Convention has the POPs Review Committee. These two committees do not look at the overall implementation of the conventions but rather focus on screening chemicals that could be included in the annexes of each convention. Under Article 13 on financial resources and mechanisms, the Stockholm Convention does make a link between the obligation, for developing countries and countries with economies in transition, to implement the convention, and the availability of funds to be provided by developed countries.

3. Does the Synergies process create a framework for future chemicals management treaties to come under the same umbrella? How does the architecture of the hierarchy of the Ex-COP vs the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions fit in with other treaties?

There is always space for other treaties to follow, especially if they are dealing with similar issues to those being addressed under the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions. However, the decision itself does not quite set up a framework, but looks at synergies on two different levels. The first is in regards to what parties can do at the national level, how they can coordinate their participation in the meetings of the Conferences of the parties and how they can implement their obligations under the three conventions in a coherent manner. The second level is in regards to the administrative issues of running the secretariat. Both the Basel and Stockholm conventions have separate secretariats, hosted by UNEP, to deliver their respective mandates, while the Rotterdam secretariat is shared between UNEP (for industrial chemicals) and FAO (for pesticides). What the synergies decision has done is to appoint a common executive secretary for the three conventions. This will generate synergies at the secretariat level, entailing more coordination and consistency. If a new instrument (or more) were to be created, nothing in the Synergies decision would prevent parties to the new convention(s) to decide to take similar decisions so that the new agreement(s) could join the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm decision.

4. How will the synergy decision help improve the reduction of hazardous wastes in Africa or other parts of the developing world?

Coordination among the ministries that deal with the three conventions at the national level is being promoted. As a result, the government will be in a better position to look at the entire life-cycle of chemicals and wastes and to implement legal measures in a more coherent manner. These changes will take time and will be better noticed once awareness is raised.

5. The conventions do not have the same number of parties. How does this impact the synergies process?

This is an advantage for the conventions that have the smaller number of parties. We have noticed that the rate of ratification has increased. For example Rotterdam has 143 parties, Stockholm has 173, i.e. only 3 parties less than Basel, which has 176. We believe that the synergies process will encourage parties who aren't party to all three conventions to become party to all.

6. Have the secretariats received information on experiences of synergies at the national level in the different regions?

Yes, we have received information and a number of case studies have been published a few months ago, jointly with UN-DESA, in the synergies success stories publication. We will soon be publishing some on our websites as well.