

Key Points from the EMG High-Level Roundtable at the 2025 BRS COP

Strengthening Action for Change: Advancing Integrated Solutions for the Implementation of the BRS Conventions

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BRS COPs
BASEL | ROTTERDAM | STOCKHOLM
CONVENTIONS

Make Visible the INVISIBLE
Sound management of chemicals and wastes

UNITED NATIONS
ENVIRONMENT MANAGEMENT GROUP EMG





Context

Building on the United Nations Environment Management Group's (EMG) high-level events at the three Rio COPs in 2024, which focused on enhancing synergies of Multilateral Environmental Agreements (MEAs), the EMG convened a subsequent roundtable discussion at the 2025 Meetings of the Conferences of the Parties of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (BC COP-17, RC COP-12 and SC COP-12).

The event brought together Heads and Senior Officials of United Nations entities and MEA Secretariats to explore how the sound management of chemicals and waste can be aligned with broader environmental commitments, such as the **Paris Agreement**, the **Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework**, and the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**. In this context, panellists addressed the question:

"How can enhanced coordination among MEAs and UN entities ensure that chemicals and waste management is fully embedded in global climate and biodiversity action, enhancing synergies and accelerating systemic and integrated solutions to pollution, biodiversity loss, and climate change?"

The panelists shared their perspectives on how to break institutional and thematic silos, strengthen coordination, and accelerate delivery through joint action.

The outcomes of this session will feed into upcoming global fora, including UNEA-7 and the Belem Climate COP towards more integrative approaches , coherence , joint resources and UN wide engagement in fulfilling the objectives of the MEAs.

Key Perspectives

Framing the Challenge:

- Recognition of the strong linkages between chemicals and waste, climate, and biodiversity has grown significantly in recent years, as the unsound management of chemicals and waste continues to have **significant human and environmental consequences**, contributing to millions of deaths annually, degrading ecosystems, exacerbating climate change, and threatening agri-food systems by undermining biodiversity and soil health.
- Chemicals and waste are not stand-alone challenges, they are seen as **cross cutting enablers or barriers to progress** needed to be made in other sectors.
- The **transboundary nature** of pollutants such as mercury, microplastics, and persistent organic pollutants, further highlights the urgent need for coordinated global action to mitigate their widespread impact.

Policy Coherence:

- Panellists emphasized the need for **systematic and integrated approaches** to tackle pollution, biodiversity loss and climate change, reaffirming the need to enhance coordination and embed chemicals and waste management into broader environmental agendas.
- To move beyond siloed approaches, embedding chemicals and waste considerations into **national planning instruments** such Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) and National Biodiversity Strategies and Action Plans (NBSAPs), was seen as a central strategy to enhancing policy coherence at the national level and aligning implementation across global environmental commitments.
- In this context, **whole-of-government approaches** - including enhanced inter-ministerial coordination - were identified as essential to deliver consistent, cross-cutting policy frameworks at the national level.
- References were made to existing **joint initiatives** that are proving effective in taking steps to combat hazardous waste and chemicals – such as the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, the Global Framework on Chemicals, and the Clean and Health Oceans Integrated Programme.

Recognition of Human Rights and Inclusion of Voices:

- **The right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment**, as recognised by the UN Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly, was underscored as a unifying principle to capture synergies across MEAs. References were made to the approaches such as the **UN Common Approach to Pollution** which intersects pollution and human rights. The legal force of the right to a healthy environment was raised as an area to note.
- Ensuring **meaningful engagement** of, and greater transparency for, civil society and marginalized groups, including indigenous peoples and women, was viewed as essential for just and effective solutions. Areas for continued action include exploring how pollution affects women.

Finance Alignment

- To enable truly cross-sectoral environmental action, financial systems must be **reoriented to support integrated planning and implementation**. Successful models, such as the Global Environment Facility's (GEF) Integrated Programs,

demonstrate the potential of coordinated funding mechanisms to drive systemic change. Examples include:

- The Good Experimental Practice (GEP) Programme that addresses harmful agrochemicals and agroplastics, while that at the same time, improves soil health, biodiversity and rural livelihoods.
- GEF's Integrated Programs (e.g., FOLUR, Amazon SAP, Blue and Green Islands) that tackle interconnected environmental crises by combining climate action, biodiversity protection, and sustainable land/ocean management into unified investments. They align with MEAs targeting systemic shifts in high-impact sectors (agriculture, cities, supply chains) through country-driven projects, private sector engagement, and innovative finance to deliver triple planetary benefits at scale.

- The **active engagement of the private sector** is equally critical, with a call to "internalize the externalities" by fully accounting for the true costs of pollution and embracing circular economy principles as a core business strategy.

Importance of Data Collection and Reporting Mechanisms:

- The need for **evidence-based policymaking** was reinforced, with support for the development of platforms like the Global Science-Policy Panel on Chemicals, Waste, and Pollution. It is crucial to ensure that scientific personnel can speak freely, without undue influence or external pressure.

- Strengthening scientific collaboration through joint expert committees and technical mechanisms enables **unified priority-setting and aligned assessments** across MEAs.

- **Robust compliance and accountability systems** were emphasized as critical to delivering tangible environmental outcomes. Existing models have demonstrated impact, including increased enforcement actions, cross-border collaboration, and disruption of illicit activities.

- In support of implementation, concrete initiatives like the DART (data reporting tool for MEAs) and InforMEA were seen as instrumental in facilitating harmonized reporting and policy coherence across MEAs.

- **Financial mechanisms** can also serve as effective tools for tracking the movement of hazardous waste and chemicals.

Cross Thematic Linkages:

- Transboundary pollution and **illegal trade** were identified as priority areas for action to strengthen cooperation.

- **Reducing hazardous pesticide use, promoting nature-based solutions, and supporting circular economy practices** in agriculture were emphasized as critical for long-term sustainability. This includes promoting the safe reuse, recycling, and recovery of agricultural plastics, while also prioritizing investment in more biodegradable inputs. Progress made in the **negotiations on a global treaty to address plastic pollution** were noted, emphasizing the treaty's synergistic alignment with existing environmental agreements like the the Basel Convention, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands to tackle plastic pollution, chemical toxicity, and transboundary waste challenges.





List of Speakers

Introductions and moderation

Mr. Hossein Fadaei, Head of the EMG Secretariat

Ms. Jo Tyndall, Director, OECD Environment Directorate

Opening and welcoming remarks

Ms. Inger Andersen, Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations, Executive Director of UNEP, and EMG Chair

Mr. Rolph Payet, Executive Secretary of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions

Panellists

Ms. Ivonne Higuero, Secretary-General, CITES

Ms. Beth Bechdol, Deputy Director-General, FAO

Ms. Monika Stankiewicz, Executive Secretary, Minamata

Dr. Marcos Orellana, Special Rapporteur on Toxics and Human Rights, OHCHR

Dr. Musonda Mumba, Secretary-General, RAMSAR

Mr. Marcos Neto, ASG and Director, for Bureau for Policy and Programme Support, UNDP

Mr. Arnold Kreilhuber, Regional Director and Representative, Regional Office for Europe, UNEP

Ms. Jyoti Mathur-Filipp, Executive Secretary, Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC) on Plastic Pollution, UNEP

Mr. Ciyong Zou, Deputy to the Director General and Managing Director of the Directorate of Technical Cooperation, UNIDO

Mr. Jiang Ru, Manager, Global Environment, Department, Planet Vice Presidency, World Bank