

# The Basel Convention and the African leadership on the issue of stockpiles of pesticides

## - A strategy for Central/Eastern Europe and Central Asia -

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Taking into account that Africa has been recognised a priority area by the Parties of the Basel Convention, that obsolete stocks of pesticides are identified as a priority activity in the context of the Basel Declaration and that POPs as wastes have been categorised as an important topic by the COP5, the SBC organised jointly with the Government of Morocco, the first Continental Conference for Africa for the environmentally sound management of unwanted stocks of hazardous wastes and their prevention in January 2001. The main purpose of this Conference was two-fold:

1. Provide a forum for African countries to decide what activities they consider important to ensure the environmentally sound management of the stockpiles of pesticides, PCBs and used oils (three priority hazardous wastes streams identified by African countries)
2. Provide a forum for enhancing the political visibility of an urgent issue chronically under-funded. The First Continental Conference benefited greatly from FAO involvement in this area since 1994.

The First Continental Conference led to three major concrete outcomes that contribute to the consolidation of the global efforts for managing unwanted stocks of hazardous wastes in an environmentally sound manner. These are:

1. The adoption of a coherent programme of action (POA)
2. A follow-up mechanism for the POA in which UNEP and SBC are required to facilitate implementation
3. A request to SBC to further explore financial mechanisms to support the POA

The First Continental Conference was instrumental in putting together the elements of a comprehensive strategic partnership that will be used for future activities. In this regard, the following elements are essential for the successful development of a regional approach in Africa in the field of stockpile management.

1. A clear mandate of all stakeholders
2. A common agreement on priorities
3. A recognition of each partner comparative advantages
4. An open, transparent and trust-building process among stakeholders
5. A common goal with targeted outputs
6. Political deadlines or bench marks

While being deeply involved in the preparation of the First Continental Conference for Africa, the SBC seized the opportunity to join the consultative process on the Africa Stockpile Project (ASP) and participated in all consultations that took place since December 2000 in Johannesburg (at the occasion of the INC/POP), in Rabat in January 2001, in Rome in March 2001 and in Washington DC in April 2001. The next consultation will be hosted by UNIDO later in 2001.

The ASP is an initiative launched by a group of stakeholders (WWF, PAN, UNEP Chemicals and SBC, FAO, the World Bank, GEF and UNIDO). Later on, the OAU, UN-ECA and the African Development Bank joined in. Its main purpose is to set up a multistakeholder partnership to assist African countries to clean-up the continent from stocks of obsolete pesticides and prevent their further accumulation. The ASP is building up the appropriate institutional framework and financial mechanism to achieve its goals. The institutional framework is shaping up, it consists of the development of a strategic partnership where GEF would be the critical kicking off financial mechanism (as part of assuming its role as the proposed interim financial mechanism for the Convention on POPs adopted in Stockholm on 22 May 2001) with the World Bank becoming the lead agency. The ASP stakeholders remaining in function as steering group. Clearly, the realisation of this multistakeholders' architecture and the implementation of the ASP programme will provide the necessary means and resources to implement a large part of the Programme of Action adopted in Rabat.

It is worth noting that the ASP represents a new, innovative and exemplary type of partnership in which MEAs (ie: the Basel Convention and the Stockholm Convention on POPs) are considered important and unavoidable partners in a major global institutional and financial venture.

The First Meeting of Core Group of the Follow up Committee to the First Continental Conference for Africa was held in Bern from 14 to 15 June 2001. The Meeting was attended by Egypt, Mauritius, Morocco, Nigeria, South Africa, and Switzerland. The meeting was convened at the invitation of Mr Roch, Secretary of State for the Environment, Switzerland, President of the Fifth Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention. The meeting was also attended by Mr. Willis, Director, UNEP-Chemicals. The Core Group agreed on a set of actions relating to the preparation of the Programme of Action for Africa in the area of pesticides, PCBs and used oils management.

What could the breakthrough in Africa mean for the obsolete pesticides problems in Central Eastern Europe and Central Asia?

The recent progress made in Africa, due to the African awareness and the African political commitment in combination with the strong involvement of the international community, could serve as an example which Central Eastern Europe and Central Asia governments could apply to move forward on the solutions of their problems.