



Fourth SPREP Executive Board Meeting
4 – 6 September 2024
 Hybrid Platforms
12:00pm – 5:00pm Samoa Standard Time

Agenda Item 8.3: Report on Basel, Rotterdam, Stockholm (BRS), and Minamata Conventions

Purpose:

1. This paper aims to:
 - i. Raise awareness of SPREP Members on the strategic importance of the decisions of the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the BRS and Minamata Conventions respectively.
 - ii. Discuss and address challenges that impede the representation and active engagement of SPREP Member countries at the BRS and Minamata COP meetings and the respective preparatory meetings facilitated by SPREP's support.

Background:

2. There are the following numbers of Pacific Members to the respective conventions 10 for Basel, 6 for Rotterdam and 14 for Stockholm whose COPs are separate but convened jointly by their shared Secretariat. The Minamata Convention has 7 Pacific Members and has its own Secretariat. All Secretariats are co-hosted at the Geneva Offices of UNEP.
3. The BRS Conventions' COPs in May 2023, was attended by 1400 delegates from 177 Parties and saw the adoption of 54 decisions previously reported to the 31 SPREP Meeting given, their strategic importance for the Pacific region. It includes the updated technical guidelines on plastic wastes, POPs wastes, and e-wastes, along with enhanced procedures under the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, underscore the need to evolve the regulatory landscape. For Pacific parties, this obligates a proactive engagement in capacity building and regional cooperation to align with these new standards in order to effectively manage chemical and waste issues, thereby safeguarding environment and health across the Pacific region.
4. The Minamata Convention COP-5, held from October 30 to November 3, 2023, marked its tenth anniversary. It focused on advancing mercury regulations and waste management. Significant agreements were made regarding the phaseout of certain mercury-added products and the establishment of a standardized threshold for mercury contamination in imports and exports. These agreements will necessitate adjustments in the supply chains and market availability for Pacific Island nations, impacting industries and consumers alike. Additionally, it obligates for enhancing monitoring and enforcement mechanisms to meet these new standards and will align with Pacific aspirations towards a Mercury-Free Pacific.

SPREP's Role and Member Participation:

5. SPREP plays a crucial role in supporting the active participation of its Members at the COPs including providing technical advice, organising briefings and preparatory meetings, preparing regional statements, reviewing and strengthening country statements, and organizing bilateral meetings with UNEP, development partners, experts and other stakeholders.

- BRS Conventions: SPREP Members who attended included Cook Islands, Kiribati, RMI, FSM, PNG, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu.
- Minamata Convention: The preparatory meeting in Palau was attended by all Pacific Parties to the Minamata Convention, including Kiribati, Marshall Islands, Palau, Samoa, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. At the COP-5, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu participated actively, with PNG attending as observers.

Challenges in Participation:

6. A key issue identified is the low participation rates of Pacific Members in the BRS and Minamata Convention COPs, largely due to challenges in the timely response to relevant communication from the Convention Secretariats and SPREP. Essential correspondence, including invitations and registration information, are often delayed in reaching the technical focal points, primarily due to routing through the National Political Focal Points from UNEP and SPREP. This low participation poses significant risks: it reduces the ability of Pacific Members to influence global environmental policies and decisions that directly affect their region. Additionally, it limits access to international technical support and financial resources aimed at environmental protection and sustainable development. Enhancing timely communication and participation is crucial for the Pacific Members to assert their needs and priorities on the international stage, thereby securing more favorable outcomes for their environmental and economic interests.

Support from Australia and New Zealand

7. The Secretariat extend its heartfelt gratitude to Australia and New Zealand, members of the JUSTCANZ Group, for their unwavering support and collaboration. Their participation in Pacific briefings, representation in various contact groups on behalf of Pacific states, and provision of scientific and technical advice on technical matters have been invaluable, especially given the limited size of Pacific delegations.

Recommendation:

8. The Executive Board Meeting is invited to:
 - 1) **Note** the strategic outcomes of the BRS and Minamata COPs and **commend** those SPREP Members who, despite challenges in participation, actively voiced their concerns and represented Pacific interests, significantly contributing to the shaping of international environmental policies;
 - 2) **Encourage** SPREP Member countries that are Parties to the BRS and Minamata Conventions, to implement all necessary national actions to fulfill the outcomes of the COPs, seeking SPREP's assistance as needed; and
 - 3) **Express** gratitude to Australia and New Zealand for their substantial support and collaboration, which significantly enhances the Pacific's capacity to engage effectively in these vital international discussions.