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**Conference of the Parties to the Basel Convention
on the Control of Transboundary Movements of
Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal**
Seventh meeting
Geneva, 25–29 October 2004
Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

**Report on the implementation of the decisions
adopted by the Conference of the Parties at
its sixth meeting**

Framework agreements and business plans of the Basel Convention regional centres

Note by the Secretariat

I. Introduction

1. By its decision VI/3 on the establishment and functioning of the Basel Convention regional centres for training and technology transfer, the Conference of the Parties adopted a core set of elements for inclusion in the framework agreement to be negotiated and signed between the Secretariat of the Basel Convention, on behalf of the Conference of the Parties, and the representative of the host country Governments for the legal establishment and functioning of the Basel Convention regional centres.
2. In decision VI/3, the Conference requested the Secretariat to submit the concluded framework agreements to the Conference of the Parties at its seventh meeting.
3. The Conference also requested the secretariat to prepare, based on reports received from the centres, a document on the implementation of decision VI/3 and on progress and difficulties encountered in the activities of the regional centres, to be presented to the Conference of the Parties at its seventh meeting with a view to assessing the adequacy of the arrangements for the functioning of the centres, including financial mechanisms.
4. The Secretariat was further requested to explore, in collaboration with the regional centres, possibilities for the establishment of partnerships with industry and other stakeholders in the work of the regional centres in order to ensure the long-term sustainability of their operation.

* UNEP/CHW.7/1.

5. In its decision VI/4 on the business plans of the regional centres, the Conference of the Parties requested the Secretariat to provide further assistance to the regional centres with the finalization of their business plans, based on consultations with the countries to be served by the respective centres, and with their implementation.

6. In the same decision, the Conference also requested the Secretariat to report to the Conference of the Parties at its seventh meeting on progress in the implementation of the business plans.

II. Implementation

7. The Secretariat has prepared a report on the implementation of the decision VI/3 on the framework agreements and of Decision VI/4 on the business plans. The report is contained in the annex to the present note.

III. Proposed action

8. Please refer to document UNEP/CHW.7/2, which contains a compilation of draft decisions for possible adoption by the Conference of the Parties.

Annex

Report on the implementation of decisions by the Conference of the Parties on Basel Convention regional centre framework agreements (decision VI/3) and business plans (decision VI/4)

A. Implementation by the host Governments, the Basel Convention regional centres and the Secretariat

1. Pursuant to decision VI/3, adopted by the Conference of the Parties at its sixth meeting, the Secretariat, in consultation with the United Nations Office of Legal Affairs, has drafted several model framework agreements which include a core set of elements set out in the decision. On the basis of these draft agreements, the Secretariat has held consultations, in person or through correspondence, with all the host Governments of the Basel Convention regional centres. Eleven regional centres have opted for the model agreement establishing a separate national legal entity with a regional role, while the regional centre in South Africa has opted to establish an intergovernmental institution that would perform the functions of the regional centre.
2. By 1 August 2004, framework agreements had been signed with Uruguay and the South Pacific Regional Environment Programme (SPREP). As described further below, most of the framework agreements to establish the remaining regional centres are close to signature. The signed framework agreements are included in document UNEP/CHW.7/INF/7.
3. During the negotiation of the framework agreements, the Secretariat emphasized the importance of receiving the written consent of the countries wishing to be served by each centre, noting that they could be included in annex III to the agreement concerned only when such written consent had been provided. Countries may, however, be added to annex III after the framework agreement is signed.
4. The Secretariat has made regular contact with the host Governments concerning the negotiation of the framework agreements. In its preparation for the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties, and taking into consideration the slow process of negotiation of some of the framework agreements, in early August 2004, the Secretariat contacted several host Governments with a view to obtaining updated information in order to be able to report to the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties on the status of internal consultations, the remaining steps to be undertaken before signature, whether ratification by the legislature would be required and an indicative timeframe before signing.
5. For the purpose of preparing a status report on the implementation of the business plans and on the adequacy of the arrangements for the functioning of the regional centres, including financial mechanisms, the secretariat carried out a survey entitled "Status of the implementation of the business plans and capacity of the centres". The full results of this survey can be found in document UNEP/CHW/OEWG/3/INF/22.
6. The secretariat organized a consultative meeting of the Basel Convention regional centres, which was held back-to-back with the third session of the Open-ended Working Group, on 25 April 2004.¹ The purpose of the meeting was to review work in progress on the legal establishment and operation of the Basel Convention regional centres as well as the implementation of related projects under the Strategic Plan for the Implementation of the Basel Convention. The report of the meeting can be found in document UNEP/CHW.7/INF/18.
7. The meeting proved to be very useful in reviewing the main issues relating to the operation of the regional centres. The question of the autonomy of the centres as a necessary condition for their increased credibility was discussed. The centres reported that a good relationship with the national focal points was essential, and called for close cooperation on a daily basis in the implementation process. In this regard, the terms of collaboration between the

¹ Previous consultative meetings were held in Basel, on 5 December 1999 (UNEP/CHW.5/29, para. 30), in San Salvador, on 10 and 11 August 2000 (UNEP/SBC/BUREAU/5/2/3, para. 21), and in Cairo, on 4 and 5 April 2002 (UNEP/CHW/WGI/1/5, para. 6).

centres and the host Governments remain in some instances to be spelled out clearly, and may have been the cause for further delay in the signing of the framework agreements.

8. Although regional consultations for the purpose of the preparation of the business plans were considered vital to attribute to the countries in each region a sense of ownership, some regional centres reported great difficulty in winning support and obtaining comments from the countries served, leading to varying degrees of endorsement of the business plans as a consequence. At least one centre indicated that the business plan prepared had been fully discussed with all the countries covered by that centre and finally adopted. In this regard, it was felt that the development of a coherent and comprehensive business plan based on a national needs assessment in all countries to be served by the centre was an activity that by itself would require a level of funding that had not yet been made available.

9. In view of the fact that UNEP overhead charges for managing the funds that are destined to the regional centres were considered high, and taking into account that the centres also have programme support costs, the meeting invited the Secretariat, whenever possible, to negotiate with UNEP about a reduction of UNEP overhead charges. The meeting also proposed that a uniform or systematic overhead percentage for the regional centres' administrative costs should be discussed. Some centres also suggested that a fee to be paid by the countries served by the centre be introduced. On a more general note, the meeting participants were of the opinion that a resource mobilization strategy for the regional centres should be considered in the context of current efforts to develop a resource mobilization strategy for the Basel Convention.

10. The meeting participants also stressed the benefit of improved communication and collaboration between the regional centres themselves, exchange of experiences and sharing of training curricula and regular meetings for the regional centres (on an annual basis), as well as the importance of the participation of the centres' directors in all sessions of the Open-ended Working Group and the Conference of the Parties.

11. In line with Conference of the Parties decision VI/4, the Secretariat continued to provide assistance to the regional centres in finalizing their business plans for the period 2003–2004. Also, further to a recommendation made by the participants in the regional centres' consultative meeting and taking into account the discussion at the third session of the Open-ended Working Group, the Secretariat elaborated guidelines for the updating of the business plans for 2005–2006. The guidelines were drafted keeping in mind the principles expressed during the meeting, i.e. the business plans should be dynamic documents that would serve for marketing the centres.² The guidelines were sent to the regional centres with the view of assisting them in preparing their new business plans in time for the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Despite the time constraints and the difficulty of the task, the secretariat has received from the regional centres a remarkably high number of business plans, which have benefited from varying degrees of consultations with the countries in each region. A compilation of the business plans is contained in document UNEP/CHW.7/INF/6.

B. Status of the framework agreements and of the implementation of the business plans

Africa and West Asia

Basel Convention Regional Centre for Training and Technology Transfer for the Arab States, Cairo, Egypt

Framework agreement

12. The text of the agreement has been agreed by both the Egyptian Government and the Secretariat of the Basel Convention in Arabic and English. The Egyptian Government is in the process of determining the domestic requirements for entry into force of the agreement.

² Guidelines for the elaboration of the 2005–2006 business plans can be found on the Basel Convention web site: <http://www.basel.int>.

Business plan

13. The Finnish Government has made an offer to donate 1,000,000 euros to the project “A Better Environment for Human Health and Well-Being” and the operation of the regional centre in Cairo, subject to the conclusion of the framework agreement. The main activity being implemented by the centre is a project funded under the Strategic Plan. The centre also organized a regional training seminar for customs, port and law enforcement officers, which was held in Port Said in September 2003, with fund from the Secretariat.

14. The business plan updated for the period 2005–2006 proposes several clusters of activities: training courses and workshops on policy making, enforcement, and technical issues; several projects, such as inventories, compilation of legal information and hazardous waste landfills; and, finally, information and advisory services as well as public awareness.

Basel Convention Regional Coordinating Centre for Africa, Ibadan, Nigeria.

Framework agreement

15. The Secretariat transmitted the text of the model agreement to the Government of Nigeria in November 2003 for its consideration. Internal consultations with relevant ministries and the University of Ibadan are being held in Nigeria. To date, however, no comments have been formally transmitted to the Secretariat.

Business plan

16. The Honourable Minister for the Environment of Nigeria officially commissioned the Basel Convention Regional Coordinating Centre for Africa, located at the University of Ibadan and built with funds provided exclusively by the Federal Ministry for the Environment. The centre is implementing two projects linked with the priority programme areas of the business plan, which are being funded under the Strategic Plan for the Implementation of the Basel Convention. These projects are a regional workshop on successful case studies of recycling, reuse and resource recovery methods towards the environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes and implementation of the Basel Convention in Africa, which was held from 9 to 12 August 2004, and a pilot project in Nigeria on the assessment and recycling of used oils in Africa. The centre developed a new web site.

17. The business plan is being updated for the period 2005–2006.

Regional Centre for French speaking, African countries, Dakar, Senegal

Framework agreement

18. The framework agreement has been through the internal consultation process with the competent Government agencies. The authorities in Senegal have transmitted a revised text to the Secretariat for its consideration and comments. It is understood that the Government of Senegal has commenced the process of obtaining the written consent of the countries to be covered by the centre. The framework agreement is expected to be signed before the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Negotiations between the Government and the anticipated host institution, the African Institute for Urban Management (L’Institut Africain de Gestion Urbaine, or IAGU), continue, with the aim of establishing a long-term collaborative framework to the benefit of the centre and the countries served.

Business plan

19. In addition to the activities undertaken under the Strategic Plan, several activities of the business plan for 2003–2004 have been implemented, with funding coming from the United States of America and the Secretariat. Further to an official request by the Government of Benin, an expert mission was organized by the centre in Benin to study the issue of the import of asbestos-containing second hand vehicles as well as asbestos waste management in general. Also, several country projects are being prepared concerning the elaboration of used oils national management plans. The publication and wide dissemination of an information bulletin, *La Lettre du Centre*, and the development and updating of a web site were also achieved. Training on inventories and the use of databases, funded under the Strategic Plan, is also being implemented.

20. The centre has updated the business plan for 2005–2006, putting the focus on the development of activities relating to training personnel from the public and private sector, enforcement of the Basel Convention at the national level and project activities concerning the environmentally sound management of priority waste streams such as hospital waste, PCBs, pesticides and used oils.

Regional centre for English-speaking African countries, Pretoria, South Africa

Framework agreement

21. Ten countries in English-speaking Africa have signed an agreement establishing the Africa Institute for the Environmentally Sound Management of Hazardous and other Wastes, which will perform the functions of the Basel Convention regional centre, through the conclusion of a memorandum of understanding between the Secretariat and the Africa Institute. Five ratifications are required for this agreement to enter into force, and the process of ratification is ongoing in most of the countries concerned. Upon entry into force of this agreement, which is expected to take place soon, a headquarters agreement will be signed between the Institute and the South African Government. A draft memorandum of understanding between the Secretariat and the Institute has been prepared and distributed to concerned Parties.

Business plan

22. Financial support by the Danish Government for a multi-year work programme for the centre has been extended by one year, to the end of June 2004. Since November 2001, capacity-building activities have benefited all 21 English speaking African countries and a total of 500 participants have been trained. In addition to a project carried out by the center in the context of the Strategic Plan, a number of commercial environmental courses were delivered to major companies in South Africa. The centre, based in Pretoria, has achieved considerable recognition in the region served and is recognized as the lead regional institution for training in hazardous waste management. Contacts have been established with important partners on the basis of a comprehensive work programme for the centre.

23. The business plan for 2005–2006 has been updated. It gives priority to building the capacity of the centre, supporting Parties in implementing the Basel Convention through training and awareness raising and implementing projects for the environmentally sound management of priority waste streams. The Government of South Africa has agreed to support financially the centre and its staff for a period of one year, starting July 2004, in order to ensure the transition until the centre is legally established as an intergovernmental institution.

Asia and the Pacific

Basel Convention Regional Centre for Training and Technology Transfer for the Asia and Pacific Region, People's Republic of China

Framework agreement

24. The text of the draft framework agreement has been the subject of extensive negotiations between China's State Environmental Protection Administration and the Secretariat. It is understood that the agreement is now the subject of internal consultations in China.

Business plan

25. Taking into consideration financial support received in the context of the Strategic Plan, five of the activities outlined in the business plan have received funding and have been carried out, including a training workshop on enforcement and customs training; regional consultations with national focal points; backstopping, awareness raising and communication through a web site; and a project on e-waste. Two activities regarding preparation of national plans on hazardous waste management and translation of guidance materials into key languages in the region have not received funding.

26. The updated business plan for 2005–2006 builds on a needs assessment and other activities that the Centre has already undertaken. Follow-up projects on e-waste and on public-private partnerships at the municipal level for management of wastes are planned.

Basel Convention Regional Centre for Training and Technology Transfer for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Indonesia

Framework agreement

27. The regional centre is in the process of reviewing and preparing for signature of the framework agreement. The Government of Indonesia has received written statements from some countries consenting to being covered by the centre. Internal consultations are ongoing amongst Government agencies whose agreement is required for the conclusion of the agreement and the legal establishment of the centre. Comments on the text of the agreement have been received by the Secretariat from Indonesia. The Secretariat, however, is still awaiting receipt of more substantive and conclusive comments from Indonesia.

Business plan

28. The centre has consulted with the focal points in the region and undertaken the necessary backstopping. It has organized a training workshop for the region and is currently organizing a second one. Many of the activities outlined in the business plan have not yet been funded, including a workshop on training of trainers and customs enforcement training.

29. An updated business plan for 2005–2006 has been submitted. It includes a fairly detailed needs assessment of all countries in the region and uses this as a basis for developing activities. Activities include training on transboundary movement of electronic wastes, illegal traffic, an inventory of persistent organic pollutant wastes, transboundary movement, mercury waste, a regional workshop on cleaner production and the establishment of a web site for the centre.

Pacific Regional Centre for Training and Technology Transfer for the Joint Implementation of the Basel and Waigani Conventions, Apia, Samoa

30. Please refer to the document on collaboration with SPREP (UNEP/CHW.7/7).

Central and Eastern Europe

Basel Convention Regional Centre For Training and Technology Transfer for Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States, Moscow

Framework agreement

31. The regional centre in Moscow and the Secretariat are in the process of reviewing and negotiating a draft of the framework agreement, with comments having been received and transmitted by both Parties. The centre has undertaken the process of obtaining written consent from countries that will be covered by the centre. Due to reorganization in the relevant Russian ministries at the time of preparation of the present document, however, the process may be delayed.

Business plan

32. In the business plan for 2003–2004, five regional projects were presented. A project on the review of existing national and international legislation on monitoring and control of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their environmentally sound management in countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States was selected for funding under the Strategic Plan. This activity is currently being implemented.

33. The business plan for the centre for 2005–2006 contains a series of intended projects, e.g. workshops on the development of legislation for the control of transboundary movement, the environmentally sound management of priority waste streams, clean production, waste minimization and environmental audits.

Basel Convention Regional Centre for Central and Eastern Europe, Bratislava, Slovakia**Framework agreement**

34. The framework agreement for the regional centre for Central and Eastern Europe in Bratislava is currently the subject of consultations with relevant national agencies. The Government of Slovakia has initiated the process of obtaining written consent from countries that will be covered by the Centre to ensure their inclusion in annex III of the agreement. The Secretariat is awaiting the conclusion of the internal consultations. The Centre in Bratislava was opened in 1997 and has undertaken a series of workshops on waste management training for authorities.

Business plan

35. In the business plan for 2003–2004, four regional workshops and four technical project proposals were introduced. Three of the project proposals were selected for funding under the Strategic Plan. The three projects address waste minimization and cleaner production in the region, the strengthening of cooperation between chemicals and hazardous waste conventions and the preparation of a regional approach for the environmentally sound management of persistent organic pollutants as wastes in Central and Eastern Europe. All three projects have been fully implemented since the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. In addition, the centre is assisting a number of countries of the region with legal assistance for the elaboration and updating of national legislation.

36. The regional centre has submitted a detailed business plan for 2005–2006 that was agreed by 12 countries served by the Centre, in which 15 projects are introduced. The project proposals have been prepared by different Parties from the region and cover various issues such as illegal traffic, biomedical and health care waste, waste from electronic and electrical equipment, used oils management and others. Projects on technology transfer for cleaner production and on recyclable hazardous wastes are also in the pipeline.

Latin America and the Caribbean**Regional Centre for South America, Argentina****Framework agreement.**

37. The Secretariat has been in negotiations on the framework agreement with the Government of Argentina (both Spanish and English texts have been prepared). Most of the text is now agreed between the Parties, with only a few items outstanding. The Government of Argentina is currently consulting at the domestic level to ensure that the agreement does not conflict with national legislation.

Business plan

38. One activity of the business plan for 2003–2004 was funded under the Strategic Plan by the Open-ended Working Group at its first session. Accordingly, a regional workshop on illegal traffic in South America was carried out. Other activities were also carried out with other sources of funding. Swiss funds were used to hold a regional workshop on the promotion of the ratification of the Basel Protocol on Liability and Compensation in Buenos Aires, Argentina from 22 to 25 June 2004; a regional awareness-raising workshop on mercury pollution for South America is being planned for 16 to 19 September 2004 with funding from UNEP Chemicals.

39. The main issue of the business plan 2005–2006 agreed by the countries served by the Centre is the control of illegal traffic in hazardous wastes, but the plan will also take into account capacity-building at the national level in cases of determined wastes streams. Part of the activities that have not been implemented since the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties would still be considered a priority (e.g., networking of laboratories, cleaner production).

Basel Convention Regional Centre for Central America and Mexico, El Salvador

Framework agreement

40. The Government of El Salvador is presently considering the text of the model framework agreement in English and Spanish and is undertaking internal consultations with relevant ministries and agencies. At the time of preparation of the present document, no official communication concerning the framework agreement has been received by the Secretariat, although some inquiries have been received and answered.

Business plan

41. The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources of El Salvador, acting on behalf of the Basel Convention regional centre for Central America and Mexico in cooperation with the Basel Convention regional centre for the Caribbean in Trinidad and Tobago is one of the implementers of a project under the Strategic Plan for the preparation of a regional strategy for the environmentally sound management of lead-acid batteries in Central America and the Caribbean.

42. The regional centre in El Salvador implements a regional project in Central America (including Panama) on the preparation of national inventories and national plans for the environmentally sound management of PCBs and PCB-containing equipment (total budget: \$650,000), which is funded by the Government of the United States of America, Finland and the Basel Convention Trust Fund. The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources selected the Universidad Centroamericana José Simeón Cañas in San Salvador to implement the project on behalf of the regional centre. The first regional workshop for the project was held from 7 to 9 July 2004 in San Salvador and addressed the specific needs for national inventories of PCBs and PCB-containing equipment.

43. The updated business plan for 2005–2006 defines four program areas: Strengthening of the centre; dissemination of information; development of synergies; and capacity-building. Several projects are proposed, including capacity-building for municipal officers in the environmentally sound management of wastes and updating of the centre's web site.

Regional centre for the Caribbean, Trinidad and Tobago

Framework agreement

44. The framework agreement with the Government of Trinidad and Tobago on the establishment of the Basel Convention Regional Centre for Training and Technology Transfer for the Caribbean region is at the stage of internal consultations within the competent Government agencies. The Government has taken the decision to establish the centre by domestic legislation to give it full independence and separate legal personality. Specific arrangements will be made to ensure that collaboration with the current host institution, CARIRI, continues. The Government of Trinidad and Tobago has taken steps to secure the written consent of countries that will be covered by the centre, and has nominated a Director for the centre. It has also given assurances that every effort will be made to have the agreement signed before the seventh meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

Business plan

45. In addition to activities that were undertaken under the Strategic Plan, several other activities of the business plan for 2003–2004 are being undertaken with additional funding from other sources. The centre has been contracted by UNEP Chemicals and the Secretariat to undertake a survey of obsolete stocks of pesticides, including persistent organic pollutants, with the view of preparing a regional proposal for the disposal of obsolete pesticides in the Caribbean region. A meeting of the advisory council of the centre was held in Trinidad and Tobago on 14 June 2004. The meeting participants discussed, among other things, the structure and composition of the steering committee for the centre under new arrangements pending the signing of the framework agreement.

46. The business plan for 2005–2006 has been updated by taking into consideration those activities not implemented since the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties that would still be considered priority activities over the next few years.

Basel Convention coordinating centre for Latin America and the Caribbean, Uruguay

Framework agreement

47. The framework agreement with the Government of Uruguay on the establishment of the Basel Convention Coordinating Centre for Training and Technology Transfer for the Latin American and Caribbean Region was signed in Montevideo, Uruguay, on 30 January 2004, and the director of the centre has been formally appointed. The centre is hosted by the Technological Laboratory of Uruguay (LATU), which is a national research centre with competencies in various scientific fields, such as chemical analysis, food control and the paper and timber industries. The centre has initiated work on environmental issues, such as environmental engineering for waste and waste water treatment. The laboratory has carried out activities with a regional scope and has a strong training and capacity-building component.

Business plan

48. The coordinating centre in Uruguay encountered difficulties in finalizing the documents for the projects approved by the Open-ended Working Group in the context of the Strategic Plan, and one of them has still not been signed by all the project partners. These projects will receive funding from various sources, namely, the International Development Research Centre and the Government of Brazil. It is expected that both projects will be implemented during the period 2004–2006. A regional workshop for the coordinated implementation of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions was held in January 2004 with financial support from Switzerland. Also, the center has been contracted by FAO to undertake a survey of capacity in Latin America and the Caribbean for the environmentally sound destruction of obsolete pesticides and the remediation of contaminated soils.

49. The centre has been selected by the interim secretariat of the Stockholm Convention as one of the institutions to develop and conduct a case study of regional and subregional centres for the purpose of facilitating capacity-building and transfer of technology in accordance with article 12 of the Stockholm Convention, with a view to contributing to the feasibility study on regional and subregional centres called for by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for an International Legally Binding Instrument for Implementing International Action on Certain Persistent Organic Pollutants in its decision INC-6/9.

50. A regional workshop will be carried out from 6 to 9 September 2004 in Caracas, Venezuela, with the view of sharing that country's experience with the disposal of obsolete pesticides. A report based on the information gathered at the workshop will be submitted to the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention and other relevant bodies.

51. The updated business plan for 2005–2006 focuses on the strengthening of the capacity of the centre, the improvement of the centre's information system and the development of synergies with other organizations or conventions. In terms of capacity-building, the centre proposes to give priority to the issues of transboundary movements, disposal technologies in the region and training of municipal officers.

C. Overview on the legal establishment and operation of the Basel Convention regional centres

1. Institutional set-up of the regional centres

52. The regional centres are mostly hosted by universities, research and technical institutes or ministries. There are advantages and disadvantages to each institutional arrangement, with some centres able to work independently of their host institutions and on a full-time basis. Some of the centres hosted by ministries for the environment are undertaking the necessary steps through the signing of the framework agreement to ensure separation from the host Government. However, while some of the centres benefit from the technical facilities, knowledge and networks of the hosting institution, they may suffer from competing demands on staff time.

53. The decision made by some of the host Governments to establish centres with separate legal personalities will necessitate careful planning to ensure a smooth transfer of power from the current host institutions to the newly created entities. This is of relevance to the centres which have not yet completed some of their project activities, including those funded under the Strategic Plan for the Implementation of the Basel Convention.

54. Under the present arrangement, the centres operate under the guidance or governance of specific bodies having a regional composition, such as an advisory council, a board of directors or like body. Mainly due to financial constraints, some of the centres have not had the opportunity to convene regular meetings of these bodies since the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties. In some cases, there has not yet been any formal convening of the guidance or governance bodies, although informal regional consultations have been held. This has had a negative impact on the overall conduct of the centres' activities, including the preparation and updating of their business plans.

55. Several host Governments have confirmed their commitment to support the regional centres. These include Nigeria, which has commissioned a new building for the Basel Convention coordinating centre for Africa, and Uruguay, which located the centre in facilities of LATU and provided laboratories, meeting rooms and new computers. Other host Governments have declared their intention to put at the disposal of the newly created centres new or additional facilities and office space, despite their limited resources. These efforts are being acknowledged.

2. Staffing

56. The number of staff per centre varies between one and five, with an estimated average of three staff members per centre, in a mix of part-time and full-time employees. Although the staffing of the centres has noticeably improved since the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties, the difficulty in securing staff to work exclusively for the centres continues to be a major constraint in developing and implementing new activities and carrying out networking and fund-raising activities.

3. Implementation of training activities and projects

57. Lack of sustained and adequate funding continues to be a major obstacle to the operation of programme activities and the development of the centres. Consequently, only a small number of the activities envisaged in the business plans for 2003–2004 and presented before the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties have been implemented. In this context, the centres have carried out on average two regional training activities, and each centre has implemented at least one training activity. Not all centres are implementing project activities, however (whether national or regional). Although efforts have been made to increase the visibility of the centres, only five have their own web sites.

58. Attempts have been made to improve the exposure and the role of the centres as potential regional coordinators and implementers of activities in cooperation or collaboration with other conventions such as the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. The following centres have carried out or are planning to implement activities pertaining to persistent organic pollutants, with co-funding from the Basel Convention: El Salvador (PCBs); Senegal (PCBs and dioxins and furans); Slovakia (obsolete pesticides and PCBs); SPREP (persistent organic pollutants case study for the Stockholm Convention Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee); Trinidad and Tobago (obsolete pesticides); and Uruguay (persistent organic pollutants case study for the Stockholm Convention Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee).

59. The regional centres in Argentina, South Africa, Trinidad and Tobago and Uruguay were contracted by the interim secretariats of the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and the Geneva Environment Network to organize meetings and training workshops. The centres in China, Nigeria, and Uruguay were invited to attend a meeting organized by FAO in April 2004 on planning technical assistance in the context of the implementation of the Rotterdam Convention.

60. The expertise and experience acquired by the regional centres in implementing activities related to the implementation of related multilateral environmental agreements may be considered an asset for future activities. Also, in the light of the fact that some of the project activities mentioned above should lead to the preparation of regional persistent organic pollutant waste management and disposal programmes, the secretariat and some of the regional centres

have initiated contacts with GEF to explore how best to access GEF funds for specific project activities. This approach is also taken into consideration in the context of the strategy for resource mobilization (see document UNEP/CHW.7/INF/8, Mobilizing resources for a cleaner future: Implementing the Basel Convention, and document UNEP/CHW.7/4 on capacity-building).

4. Development of partnerships

61. Representatives of national authorities constitute key partners of the Basel Convention regional centres. Such authorities include ministries for the environment and foreign affairs and national focal points. Basel Convention regional centres must make continuing efforts to engage the active involvement of other national partners such as local authorities, civil society and the local business community, and to engage with their member countries, including by organizing more activities in those countries.

62. Some progress has been made in nurturing partnerships with new stakeholders, such as technical institutions, research centres, international organizations, local authorities, non-governmental organizations and industry. Preliminary contacts have been established with the private sector and local authorities for the implementation of programme activities to be coordinated by the regional centres. Such efforts need to be followed up.

63. In this context, the experience of some regional centres, such as the one in South Africa, which was implementing a multi-year programme of activities, has been shared with other centres. In order to create confidence in the centres and achieve recognition, the following approach may be followed:

(a) To carry out regional training activities, free of charge, in order to make participants appreciate the work and importance of these seminars, to raise capacity that could be afterwards utilized for further activities ("train the trainers") and, especially, to maintain a relationship of trust with the focal points of all the countries concerned;

(b) To carry out national training, with the agreement that the countries would cover a minimum (perhaps 15 per cent) of the costs of the seminar. Such commitments are necessary to get the countries involved and share the ownership of the project, and are achieved thanks to the assistance of the focal points of the countries concerned;

(c) To develop a marketing strategy, including the elaboration of documents and dossiers that reflect the commitment and activities of a given centre.

5. Financial mechanism

64. Although the regional centres and the Secretariat succeeded in raising additional funds for five Strategic Plan projects, on the whole, little financial support has been received from sources outside the Basel Convention Trust Fund. Some financial support was provided by the countries agreeing to be served by the centres. Bilateral financial assistance received by the centres for multi-year activity programmes has remained somehow limited, however.

65. As a consequence, the regional centres suffer from a lack of financial viability, which clearly hampers their natural development. The implementation by the regional centres of projects funded under the Strategic Plan has in several cases proved essential to keeping the centres operational. In this context, a long-term financial strategy for every centre may be necessary.

6. Reported opportunities for further actions

66. Several opportunities and elements that would assist in enhancing the sustainability of the centres are listed below:

(a) The enhancement of the legal status of the regional centres: This has been the cornerstone of the strategy followed by the Basel Convention in order to ensure the viability and sustainability of the centres in the long-term. The granting to the centres of independent legal personality should, it is anticipated, facilitate the securing of additional financial resources for their activities. The encouraging progress that has been achieved in enhancing the legal status of the centres and improving their accountability, would, though, be considered a first preliminary step that would necessitate the completion of additional tasks;

(b) Bilateral or multilateral support: This would be critical in application of the principle that the regional centres should be assisted for the kick-off period through, in particular, the funding of multi-year work-programmes. The main objectives of such work programmes would be to achieve regional recognition, increase visibility, build areas of competence and knowledge and develop sustainable partnerships with partners from various sectors. In the light of the weaknesses of the regional centres in achieving these medium-term objectives in the absence of financial and technical resources, external assistance appears very timely;

(c) The promotion, as far as possible, of activities that ensure a coordinated implementation of and synergies with other multilateral environmental agreements and regional programmes, in accordance with the mandates of the regional centres and the interests of the countries served by the centres and in agreement with decisions adopted by other multilateral environmental agreements: In this context, cooperation with the Rotterdam Convention and the Stockholm Convention are an important element of this strategy. The experience and expertise gained by the regional centres should be acknowledged and made an asset. Activities should also be coordinated with the Montreal Protocol on Substance that Deplete the Ozone Layer, the SAICM process and the regional seas programmes, among others;

(d) Enhancement of the regional centres as service providers: Some regional centres have enjoyed useful and successful preliminary experiences (e.g., South Africa) in developing commercial training and other courses or in being contracted by specialized agencies (e.g., Uruguay) for undertaking regional surveys. This experience should be shared and expanded. Conditions for rendering the regional centres more attractive to the private sector may need to be analysed with the aim of increasing funding from private sources;

(e) Under the supervision of the relevant bodies of the Basel Convention, the development of a mechanism to monitor the establishment and operation of the regional centres and the implementation of activities funded by the Basel Convention trust funds.
