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**Matters for consideration or action by the Conference of the Parties:
information exchange**

**First draft of a strategic plan for establishing procedures for
the operation of the clearing-house mechanism under the
Stockholm Convention****

Note by the Secretariat

As referred to in the note by the Secretariat on the clearing-house mechanism for information exchange on persistent organic pollutants, contained in document UNEP/POPS/COP.2/13, the annex to the present note contains a first draft, prepared by the Secretariat, of a strategic plan for establishing procedures for the operation of the clearing-house mechanism under the Stockholm Convention. The draft is intended to provide a starting point for discussion and the possible further development of such a plan in accordance with a process to be determined by the Conference of the Parties.

* UNEP/POPS/COP.2/1.

** Stockholm Convention, Article 9; report of the Conference of the Parties on the work of its first meeting (UNEP/POPS/COP.1/31), paragraph 45.

Annex

First draft of a strategic plan for establishing procedures for the operation of the clearing-house mechanism under the Stockholm Convention

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I. Executive summary

1. To be developed.

II. Situational analysis

A. Introduction

2. At its sixth session, Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for an International Legally Binding Instrument for Implementing International Action on Certain Persistent Organic Pollutants adopted decision INC.6/7, in which it invited Governments to submit questions and comments related to the design, development, operation and scope of a clearing-house mechanism for information exchange on persistent organic pollutants (POPs). The Negotiating Committee requested the Secretariat to prepare, taking into account those submissions, a detailed work plan for the initiation and maintenance of such a mechanism. The responses received from Governments varied considerably, and the need for further work in this area became evident.

3. At its seventh session, the Negotiating Committee noted the important function that an effective clearing-house mechanism for information exchange would have on the successful implementation of the Convention. It also noted the importance of providing funds for a dedicated staff member to work on the clearing-house mechanism beginning in 2005 and to complete a phase one analysis of possible clearing-house expanded functions in time for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties.¹

4. Due to time constraints, the issue of the clearing-house mechanism was not discussed at the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties.

5. The present draft strategic plan has been prepared by the Secretariat as a discussion document with the aim of providing a framework to guide the further development of the mechanism.

6. In preparing the draft, the Secretariat studied how clearing-house mechanisms have been developed under other environmental conventions.

1. Mandates

7. Paragraph 4 of Article 9 of the Convention states that "...the Secretariat shall serve as a clearing-house mechanism for information on Persistent Organic Pollutants, including information provided by Parties, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations..." Article 9 also defines different groups of information providers, including Parties, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations.

8. Serving as the clearing-house mechanism is an important function of the Secretariat. In that capacity, the Secretariat plays a key role in international information-exchange activities relating to POPs.

¹ UNEP/POPS/INC.7/28, paragraphs 93–96.

9. Article 20 of the Convention requires the Secretariat to undertake, among other things, the following information-exchange activities:

- (a) To make available information relevant to meetings and conferences;
- (b) To provide the information that might be required to facilitate assistance to the Parties in the implementation of the Convention;
- (c) To coordinate information-exchange activities with the secretariats of other multilateral environmental agreements and relevant international bodies;
- (d) To collect and re-package data, reports, evaluations and other information as information products and undertake their dissemination;
- (e) To perform any other information-exchange function as may be assigned to it by the Conference of the Parties.

10. Full implementation of these mandates for international information exchange on POPs implies a responsibility to coordinate, organize and catalyze other information-exchange activities at the national and regional levels. The Convention, however, provides little guidance as to how the information exchange should be organized or on the scope of the clearing-house mechanism and provides no explicit mandates in relation to national and regional information-exchange activities and their relation to the mechanism. References to the clearing-house mechanism in the present paper should therefore be construed as referring to coordination and information-exchange activities and projects at the global level only.

2. Other guidance

11. Countries' submissions in response to the request for comments by the Negotiating Committee at its sixth session in relation to the design, development, operation and scope of the clearing-house mechanism,² as well as discussions and interventions at the Negotiating Committee's sixth and seventh sessions, provide further guidance for the development of procedures for the operation of the mechanism. The Secretariat's analysis of Parties' information-exchange needs, based on those submissions and discussions, is contained in annex II to the present document. Some common suggestions can be identified, including that the mechanism should:

- (a) Be cost-effective and have a reasonable budget and be implemented in a phased manner, with the Conference of the Parties guiding the process and approving each phase and budget;
- (b) Provide the means to identify and address the lack of specific information in several areas; the need for mechanisms to identify further information needs should be addressed;

² The submissions are contained in document UNEP/POPS/INC.7/INF/16.

- (c) Take into account the need to focus on issues related to the provision of technical and financial assistance; the information provided by the mechanism should aim at provision of technical and financial assistance;
- (d) Take into account and integrate information acquired through feasibility and case studies on regional and subregional centres;
- (e) Address the need to ensure the availability of information in the six official languages of the United Nations;
- (f) Provide methods for selecting countries for case studies related to the clearing-house; elaboration of selection criteria for case studies related to the mechanism;
- (g) Take into account the importance of searching for synergies and efficiencies by coordinating with and linking to related initiatives.

B. Analysis of the Secretariat situation³

12. The following analysis evaluates the strengths and weaknesses of the Secretariat and the opportunities and threats that it faces in developing and undertaking a leading role for information exchange on POPs. The analysis is limited to information exchange and does not relate to other Secretariat functions with respect to other areas such as capacity-building, technical assistance or transfer of technology.

Strengths – What is already there that should be preserved?

- There is significant clearing-house capacity shared with other United Nations Environment Programmes (UNEP) units in Geneva, such as existing websites, information technology hardware and software infrastructure, shared human resources and expertise on information exchange and management;
- The Secretariat owns and operates the existing POPs websites and has been mandated by the Convention to serve as a clearing-house mechanism on POPs;
- Most reporting required by the Convention must be done through the Secretariat; the information contained in the various implementation reports by Parties is managed by the Secretariat;
- The Secretariat has demonstrated ability and capacity to coordinate information-exchange activities. The interim Secretariat coordinated information exchange activities on POPs during the negotiation of the Stockholm Convention;
- The geographical location of the Secretariat allows for easy and efficient collaboration and synergies with other international stakeholders on POPs;
- The Parties have accepted existing information exchange;
- Parties seem generally satisfied with UNEP POPs websites and appreciative of the quality, transparency and valuable information they contain.

³ The analysis follows the so-called SWOT format. SWOT stands for “strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats”. This key part of strategic planning examines the organization and its external and future environment. Strengths and weaknesses refer to the current assets and liabilities of an organization. Opportunities and threats exist outside the organization and may arise in the future.

Weaknesses – What should be eliminated or changed?

- Procedures for engaging consultants and staff limit the ability to respond to changing technical situations and client needs in a timely fashion;
- There is a lack of clarity about the scope and nature of information-exchange activities and their integration with other secretariat functions;
- Implementation of the Convention at the national level started before establishment of the clearinghouse mechanism and information being generated at the national level may not be generated in a way that allows for smooth integration in the mechanism;
- The scope of the mechanism needs to be defined, as will its organization;
- Other implementation aspects of the Convention have higher priority than the clearing-house mechanism.

Opportunities – What are the circumstances and situations related to information exchange that the Secretariat should capitalize on to develop further and implement the clearing-house mechanism?

- The Secretariat is in a state of development, thus providing an opportunity for easier integration of clearing-house functions;
- Projects and activities related to the World Summit on the Information Society provide an opportunity to strengthen the capacity of developing countries to use the Internet and to better manage information;⁴
- There is greater focus on the tools which have already been established for information exchange on POPs, such as the Chemical Information Exchange Network (CIEN) (<http://www.epa.gov/cien/index.html>) and the Information Exchange Network on Capacity-building for the Sound Management of Chemicals (INFOCAP) (www.infocap.org);
- The linkages with other multilateral environmental agreements and POPs initiatives provide an opportunity to develop synergies for information exchange and to integrate other information-exchange activities into the clearing-house mechanism to avoid duplication of efforts and make use of the strengths of the Convention's partners;
- The Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity-building, adopted by the UNEP Governing Council at its twenty-third session (UNEP/GC.23/11), considers support to national and regional institutions in data collection, analysis and monitoring and other information-exchange capacity-building activities;
- New information technologies are available that improve the management of information and knowledge;
- Partnerships with industry and civil society have been developed for information exchange on POPs-related issues.

Threats - What are the options and external factors to be avoided and difficulties to be addressed?

- Ad hoc development of clearing-house mechanism elements by different stakeholders may result in a mechanism that is not coherent, compatible or user friendly, and may lead to duplication of efforts;
- Information from various external sources may be in different formats;

⁴ Information on opportunities provided by the World Summit on the Information Society process may be found at <http://www.itu.int/wsis/>.

- Parties and other end-users have evolving demands;
- There continues to be a lack of clarity about mechanism scope and functions and a lack of ownership by the Conference of the Parties;
- Sufficient resources for mechanism staffing and activities are not realized;
- Parties and other information contributors do not provide the required information;
- There is a widespread lack of understanding of the role of the mechanism and the and opportunities it presents.

C. Key issues

13. The following key issues have been identified during the analysis of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT analysis):

(a) **Definition of the POPs clearing-house mechanism:** A clearing-house mechanism, independent of its scope, has three major elements:

- (i) **Information capital:** The information content exchanged by the clearing-house mechanism network members. It consists primarily of information on POPs, but may include some additional information as decided by Parties;
- (ii) **Human capital:** The network of information providers/sources, users and institutions working to implement the Stockholm Convention and formally contributing to and using the clearing-house mechanism;
- (iii) **Operational capital (tools and processes):** A set of information tools, products and services, and the necessary processes and resources to design, implement, operate and further enhance them.

(b) **Focus:** Article 9 of the Convention provides the main mandate for the clearing-house mechanism and focus on the exchange of information on POPs, including information provided by Parties and intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations. The analysis of Parties' information needs shows that stakeholders are expecting the clearing-house mechanism also to promote the sharing of expertise for the effective implementation of the Convention.

(c) **Ownership:** The clearing-house mechanism is a function of the Secretariat. The Secretariat is responsible for establishing procedures for its operation and for managing it on behalf of the Parties to the Convention.

(d) **Geographical scope:** The Convention does not provide guidance on the extent to which the clearing-house mechanism should extend to the national and regional levels. Further clarification from the Parties in this regard will be sought.

(e) **Funding:** Information exchange is a cross-cutting issue; most POPs-related activities have information components, although they are often not properly identified and budgeted. Appropriate mechanisms are needed to identify funding needs for information-exchange activities and possible ways to address them.

(f) **Sustainability:** The long-term sustainability of the global clearing-house mechanism needs to be planned. Access to resources – financial, technical, human and information – is essential to that sustainability. Targeted and sustained partnerships to guarantee the necessary resources need to be explored.

III. Mission

14. The clearing-house mechanism shall undertake or facilitate the collection, management, distribution and exchange of information on POPs to enable Parties to make sound decisions on POPs and to implement the Stockholm Convention.

IV. Vision

15. The aim is to develop a global clearing-house mechanism that empowers stakeholders and users with the means to contribute and access up-to-date, quality information necessary to make sound decisions on POPs and to implement the Stockholm Convention, in a transparent, neutral, efficient and user-friendly manner.

16. The clearing-house mechanism will provide Parties, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and other stakeholders with the means and capacity to contribute valuable information on POPs that is easily channelled and incorporated into the mechanism. The information will be validated, re-packaged and integrated, translated if necessary, processed and made accessible to different user groups in a user-friendly format by means of information products and services. Parties, intergovernmental organizations, non-governmental organizations and other actors will be able to make sound decisions on POPs based on the information available through the mechanism. Other multilateral environmental agreements and information-exchange initiatives will profit from and contribute to the mechanism; cooperation and coordination will be enhanced, resulting in the further development of synergies.

17. The clearing-house mechanism will embrace all traditional, scientific and technological ways and means of transmitting information, including paper-based, electronic components and Internet based tools. It will operate as a global, open and transparent network. It will take a proactive and collaborative approach to identifying, prioritizing and meeting the information needs of its wide range of users.⁵ In so doing, it shall, under guidance from the Conference of the Parties, be responsive in meeting the evolving needs of its stakeholders and users, and contribute to achieving the broader objectives of the Convention (e.g., providing access to key POPs information in languages and helping to raise the awareness of the general public worldwide with regard to POPs issues).

⁵ This will include developed and developing countries, governmental and non-governmental organizations, scientific establishments, business and other private organizations, civil society and communications media.

V. Goals

18. In order to achieve the above mission, two major areas of work need to be developed and integrated. The first, relating to **information exchange**, is related to the information content itself and the means to collect, manage, process and re-distribute it. The second, relating to **networking for information exchange**, is linked to the network of people and institutions that will provide and use the information.

19. The two strategic goals set out below will guide the work to be undertaken in these areas towards the achievement of the clearing-house mechanism vision.

A. **First goal: Establishment of procedures for the operation of a global mechanism to facilitate identification, integration and exchange of information on POPs**

1. **Focus**

20. The focus of this goal is content and information flow on a global scale. The purpose is to facilitate the identification and integration of information content and the sources of the information and to facilitate information exchange. The driving forces include Convention requirements, mandates from the Conference of the Parties and stakeholder and user needs.

21. This goal involves providing improved and integrated access to existing information sources, identifying information gaps and fostering the establishment and development of new information sources accordingly; and promoting and catalyzing the exchange of information, knowledge, experience and best practices.

22. Set out below are measurable objectives for guiding and evaluating progress towards this goal, strategies for achieving those objectives and corresponding roles and responsibilities.

2. **Objectives**

23. The objectives set out below reflect desired growth in seven necessary and complementary areas of action:

(a) **Value added**

24. The objective is to improve steadily the value of information available through the clearing-house mechanism for achieving the goals of the Convention.

25. Possible performance indicators include the number and percentage of surveyed users perceiving improvement in the value of the information, the number of information gaps identified and addressed and the number of new information sources established and integrated into the mechanism.

(b) **Use**

26. The objective is to achieve continuous expansion in the use made of clearing-house mechanism information products, services and processes by diverse user groups, including use and provision of information.

27. Possible performance indicators include the number of providers and users of the clearing-house mechanism, the number of information products and services and the number of different user groups using the mechanism.

(c) Quality

28. The objective is to improve steadily the overall quality of clearing-house mechanism information, products and services and the ability of users to assess the quality of specific information.

29. Possible performance indicators include the number and percentage of surveyed users perceiving improvement in the quality of clearing-house mechanism information, products and services and the amount of quality-related feedback received.

(d) Speed and facility

30. The objective is to enhance progressively the speed and facility of clearing-house mechanism transactions, including the ability of users to contribute, locate and retrieve desired information.

31. Possible performance indicators include the number and percentage of surveyed users perceiving improvement in the speed and facility of clearing-house mechanism transactions, the number and percentage of successes in contributing, locating and retrieving desired information and the number of information products and services, user applications and features available.

(e) User needs responsiveness

32. The objective is to improve continuously the ability of users to articulate individual and collective information needs and of the clearing-house mechanism to meet those needs in a timely manner.

33. Possible performance indicators include the number and percentage of surveyed users perceiving improvement in the timeliness of the clearing-house mechanism in meeting their information needs and the number of individual and collective information requests received.

(f) Integration

34. The objective is to achieve steady growth in the helpfulness of the clearing-house mechanism for enabling comparisons between data and in providing summaries and syntheses of resulting information.

35. Possible performance indicators include the number and percentage of surveyed users perceiving improvement in the helpfulness of the clearing-house mechanism for enabling data comparison and providing summaries and syntheses and the number of features and services in the mechanism allowing for the comparison, aggregation and segregation of information.

(g) Volume

36. The objective is to expand progressively the amount of POPs information referenced or directly accessible via the clearing-house mechanism in key areas of interest and focus (e.g., national reports; legislation and policies; scientific, technical and thematic issues, etc.) and from diverse sources.

37. Possible performance indicators include the number of documents, reports, articles, etc. available per category, the number of information sources covered and the number and size of websites, databases, publications, etc.

3. Strategies

38. The objectives relating to the first goal will be achieved through five strategies, which are described below. Information on building the information networks themselves is provided in the section of the document dealing with the second goal.

(a) Ensuring compatibility through standardization and interoperability

39. The strategy involves providing and achieving acceptance of tools, guidelines, protocols and standards for promoting the compatibility of information content and network structure and processes, and can be achieved by:

(a) Monitoring and facilitating the progress of appropriate standards organizations;

(b) Coordinating with related initiatives (e.g., CIEN, INFOCAP, pollutant release and transfer registers, etc.) For example, attend their meetings and convene joint meetings;

(c) Identifying areas where information and infrastructure compatibility are necessary, while keeping standardization requirements to a minimum;

(d) Identifying best practices, standards and protocols regarding:

- Clearing-house mechanism website formats, topic areas and terminologies,
- Quality and reliability of information and methods for enabling users to assess them;
- Information sharing protocols;
- Indexing and searching protocols (including the use of metadata);

(e) Documenting standards and protocols to provide clear guidance and guidelines for countries and organizations creating or expanding their own applications within the POPs clearing-house mechanism;

(f) Developing criteria and procedures for the full involvement of other POPs actors, such as international businesses and non-profit organizations, as thematic focal points or partners;

(g) Ensuring, where feasible, the use of standard protocols and formats for efficient data exchange between systems (e.g. Z39.50, web services, XML etc.);

(h) Regularly updating and enhancing the user guide for building applications for the clearing-house mechanism, associated training, and related compatibility and interoperability checklists.

(b) Tracking information needs, priorities and best practices

40. The strategy involves tracking gaps in information and expertise and national needs, priorities, best practices and lessons learned, on an ongoing basis. This can be achieved by developing and using multiple vehicles for enabling users to articulate individual and collective information needs and priorities, including national reports, user surveys, user requests and complaints, workshops and user conferences.

(c) Prioritizing and promoting expansion

41. The strategy involves identifying priorities for clearing-house mechanism growth and improvement based on user needs and strategic considerations, and promoting expansion accordingly. Measures to undertake this include:

(a) Coordinating with related initiatives at all levels, for example by attending their meetings and convening common meetings;

(b) Using funding to promote country involvement, partnering and progress in priority areas;

(c) During the periods between meetings of the Conference of the Parties, focusing information expansion and synthesis on issues and topics to be covered at upcoming meetings;

(d) Prioritizing information expansion and synthesis for chemicals that are under consideration for inclusion in the Convention pursuant to Article 8 of the Convention.

(d) Providing open, worldwide access to existing POPs information

42. The strategy involves engaging national focal points in providing access through the clearing-house mechanism to existing information within their countries.

(e) Rationalizing and customizing

43. The strategy involves developing and using the right tool for the right task and for the right target audience. This can be achieved by:

(a) Performing analysis and research to identify the most effective tool for each task (related to information technology or not). Give preference to existing tools over developing new ones, where appropriate;

(b) Using document-based systems for small volumes and heterogeneous information (information which is not standard and not easily integrated);

(c) Using database systems for larger volumes and more standard types of information requiring the performance of repetitive tasks (structure and format must be defined);

(d) Using the internet and other electronic means of data transfer where feasible, thereby minimizing the use of paper-based data transfers;

(e) Using specialized expertise for complex information analysis and using partnerships with universities and non-profit organizations for less complex tasks where use of information technology is not feasible;

(f) Using the internet for information dissemination where feasible, using CD-ROMs, paper and other media where internet use is not feasible and using the right dissemination media for the right target audience.

4. Relationship between strategies and objectives

44. The relationship between strategies and objectives is shown in the table below. To facilitate evaluation, baseline measurements for each objective will be developed during the implementation of the first phase and will be incorporated into the present document.

Strategy	Objective						
	Value Added	Use	Quality	Facility	Responsiveness	Integration	Volume
Ensuring compatibility through standardization and interoperability		Yes	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Tracking information needs, priorities and best practices	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Prioritizing and promoting expansion	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Providing open, world-wide access to existing information on POPs	Yes	Yes		Yes			Yes
Rationalizing and customizing		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

5. Roles and responsibilities

45. To be developed during the pilot phase of the clearing-house mechanism.

B. Second goal: Establishment of the clearing-house mechanism global network of information providers, users and institutions, having the common needs of sharing information and expertise on POPs

1. Focus

46. The focus of this goal is to identify the components of the network for information exchange, including the information providers, users, Secretariat and the Conference of the Parties. The purpose is to develop a framework for efficient interaction among those involved in POPs information exchange, to promote the clearing-house mechanism and its use, and to foster international cooperation for information exchange on POPs. The driving forces include Convention obligations, POPs-related pollution and health problems, the promotion of alternatives and alternative approaches, opportunities for research and development, synergies, funding and other common needs and interests.

47. This goal involves, among other things: identifying and enrolling network members; defining member groups, establishing their profiles, roles and responsibilities; identifying partner institutions and developing necessary agreements; conducting clearing-house mechanism awareness raising and capacity building activities.

48. Set out below are measurable objectives for guiding and evaluating progress towards this goal; strategies for achieving those objectives; and corresponding roles and responsibilities.

2. Objectives

49. The objectives set out below reflect desired growth in four necessary and complementary areas of action towards the establishment of the clearing-house mechanism global network:

(a) Network membership and enrolment

50. The objective is to involve a critical mass of members in the network and to expand progressively the network membership across countries, regions, and institutions, including intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and cross-sectoral thematic focal points. The focus is on populating a comprehensive, global, selective but non-discriminatory, multi-sectoral network and the outputs include terms of reference for providers and users, lists of user groups, providers and experts, indicating their expertise, user profiles and provider profiles.

51. Possible performance indicators include the number of Parties having designated national focal points, the number of network members by region, the number and percentage of network members by categories and the number and percentage of network members by social and economic sectors.

(b) Member responsiveness

52. The objective is to increase and steadily improve the capacity of network members to articulate information needs and agree on priorities, share experiences and expertise leading to a comprehensive global dialogue for information exchange on POPs. The focus is on the commitment of network members and their active participation and outputs include member contributions.

53. Possible performance indicators include the total number of individual contributions by network members, such as information on POPs, information needs, priorities, experiences, expertise and feedback, the total number of collective contributions by network members, comparative geographical coverage of contributions received and comparative social and economic coverage of contributions received.

(c) Awareness and use of the clearing-house mechanism

54. The objective is to increase steadily awareness of the capabilities and benefits of the clearing-house mechanism and progressive expansion in the use made of the information and processes available under the clearing-house mechanism. The focus is on marketing the clearing-house mechanism and its use and outputs include promotional events and materials.

55. Possible performance indicators include the number of individuals and groups receiving information on clearing-house mechanism products and services, the number of promotional materials and events, the number of requests received for information or information products and the amount of website traffic per month or season.

(d) Collaboration

56. The objective is to develop and steadily improve collaboration with multilateral environmental agreements, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations and funding agencies in support of information exchange initiatives. The focus is on the development of synergies and partnerships and outputs include partnerships and agreements.

57. Possible performance indicators include the number of partner organizations, the number of partnerships and collaboration agreements And the number of joint projects.

3. Strategies

58. The above objectives will be achieved through six strategies, as described below.

(a) Concentrating on key actors

59. To ensure an effective and efficient use of resources, the strategy involves maximizing on results while economizing on resources by identifying leverage points on which to focus efforts, in other words, it is important to concentrate initially on key actors with potential to have a major impact on the implementation of the Convention. This can be achieved by:

(a) Identifying and involving members and partners capable of producing a domino effect for POPs knowledge, action and funding;

(b) Establishing national focal points. Pursuant to paragraph 3 of Article 9 of the Convention, each Party shall designate a national focal point for the exchange of information on POPs;

(c) Identifying key actors whose decisions may have greater impact on the objectives of the Convention and developing target marketing for them;

(d) Addressing marketing efforts on target actors. Highlighting specific benefits for a specific target sector;

(e) Identifying champions of information exchange;

(f) Creating partnerships with existing networks to expand the POPs network;

(g) Creating partnerships with existing information exchange related initiatives (CIEN, INFOCAP, pollutant release and transfer registers, etc.);

(h) Using the strengths of partners and members to promote the clearing-house mechanism networks;

(i) Promoting the clearing-house mechanism at conferences, workshops and other events.

(b) Grouping actors according to their affinities and promoting their interlinkages

60. The strategy involves considering multi-disciplinary and multi-sectoral approaches in addition to thematic or like-minded groups to avoid compartmentalization and to stimulate creativity and innovation. This can be achieved by:

(a) Identifying as comprehensively as possible the member categories, i.e. include providers and user groups and domain experts;

(b) Developing a framework for efficient interaction with network members. Developing and communicating the roles and responsibilities of each group;

(c) Establishing membership and user categories, such as national focal points, intergovernmental organization focal points, non-governmental organization focal points, thematic focal points and groups such as information providers, users, experts, information owners and managers;

(d) Fostering teamwork capabilities and establishing a solid base to develop a network that works collaboratively to achieve the clearing-house mechanism goals. Tools for virtual meetings, video conferences, discussion forums, web logs, etc., could be developed to strengthen links between network members at low costs.

(c) Fostering joint endeavours to develop synergies and avoid duplication of efforts

61. The strategy involves mentoring and learning between network members to profit from the network knowledge base to strengthen its capacity. This can be achieved, for example, by developing e-learning tools and databases of experts.

(d) Relying on partnerships and focusing on facilitation

62. The strategy involves relying on partnerships and focusing on facilitation, by:

(a) Concentrating on facilitating, encouraging and promoting;

(b) Engaging a wide range of POPs stakeholders to pool resources and share work, including promotion of the clearing-house mechanism;

(c) Contributing to partners' POPs-related activities through joint endeavours.

(e) Nurturing membership and partnership

63. The strategy involves nurturing membership and partnership, by:
- (a) Clarifying and communicating roles and responsibilities;
 - (b) Ensuring satisfaction;
 - (c) Rewarding valuable contributions and initiatives;
 - (d) Developing good communication at all levels, organizing and improving communication resources between the Secretariat and network members and among network members and developing communication mechanisms to ensure global participation, including areas with poor or no internet connection.

(f) Promoting use of the clearing-house mechanism

64. The strategy involves promoting awareness, understanding, use and expansion of the clearing-house mechanism through communication and education activities.

4. Relationship between strategies and objectives

65. The relationship between strategies and objectives is shown in the table below. To facilitate evaluation, baseline measurements for each objective will be developed during the implementation of the first phase and will be incorporated into the present document.

Strategy	Objective			
	Membership and enrolment	Member responsiveness	Awareness and use	Collaboration
Concentrating on key actors	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Grouping actors according to their affinities and promoting interlinkages	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Fostering joint endeavours to develop synergies and avoid duplications		Yes		Yes
Relying on partnerships and focusing on facilitation		Yes	Yes	Yes
Nurturing membership and partnership	Yes	Yes		Yes
Promoting use of the clearing-house mechanism	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

5. Roles and Responsibilities

66. To be developed.

VI. Clearing-house mechanism: concept, implementation and management approach

A. Definitions

67. For the purposes of the present document, the following definitions apply:

- **Cycle:** One cycle is understood to mean one full rotation throughout the stages set out in figure 1 below. One clearing-house mechanism cycle covers two calendar years, coinciding with the Convention budget cycle;
- **Phase:** One phase of clearing-house mechanism implementation and operation covers two clearing-house mechanism cycles;
- **Pilot phase:** The pilot phase is a special start-up phase that will cover only one clearing-house mechanism cycle and will serve as a test bed for the concept illustrated in figure 1;
- **Network members:** The term “network members” is understood to mean the people and institutions formally exchanging information under the POPs clearing-house mechanism.

B. Concept

68. The POPs clearing-house mechanism is a multi-stakeholder global mechanism set up and operated by the Stockholm Convention Secretariat under the guidance and oversight of Parties, to facilitate the exchange of information on POPs. Its three major components are:

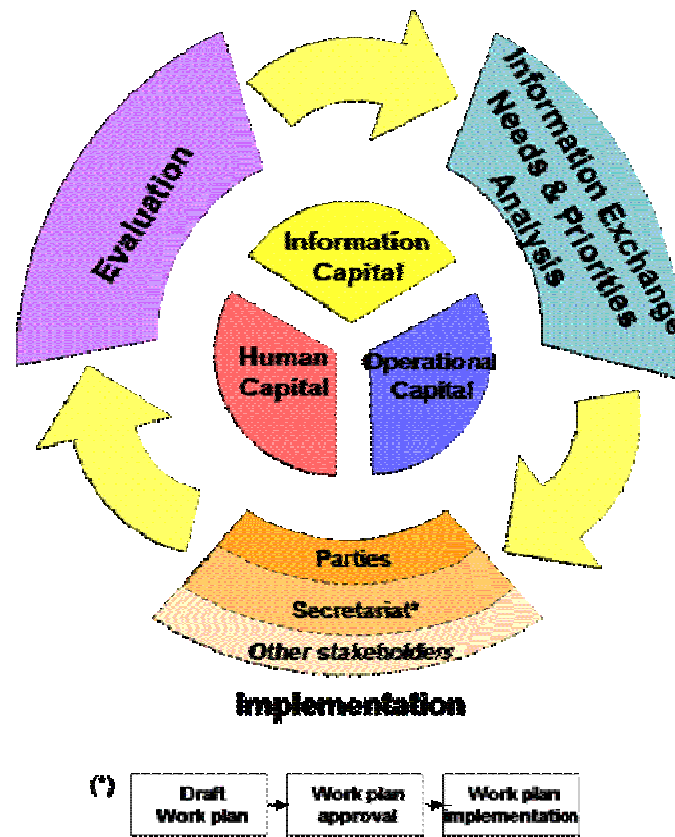
- **Information capital:** The content of information exchanged by the clearing-house mechanism network members. It consists primarily of information on POPs, but may include some additional information as decided by Parties.
- **Human capital:** The global network of information providers, users and institutions working to implement the Stockholm Convention and formally contributing to and using the clearing-house mechanism.
- **Operational capital:** a set of information tools, products and services, and the necessary processes and resources to design, implement, operate and further enhance them.

69. The proposed clearing-house mechanism concept, implementation and management approach is illustrated in figure 1 below. The implementation and management process will follow a phased approach, with each phase consisting of two cycles. Each cycle consists of three stages:

- (a) Information exchange needs and priority analysis;
- (b) Implementation;
- (c) Evaluation.

70. Each cycle aims to increase the usefulness of the clearing-house mechanism for the implementation of the Convention through a steady improvement of its performance.

Figure 1: clearing-house mechanism concept, implementation and management approach



C. Analysis, implementation and evaluation cycle

1. Information exchange needs and priority analysis

71. Every four years, at the initiation of a phase, the Secretariat, in consultation with Parties, will analyse the information exchange needs and priorities. This analysis will be presented for consideration at the next meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Parties will have the opportunity to adjust those needs and priorities after two years, at the end of the first cycle.

2. Implementation

72. On the basis of the above-mentioned analysis, the Secretariat will develop a draft work plan and budget for the first cycle and an indicative work plan and budget for the second cycle, and present it to the Conference of the Parties for consideration and approval. The indicative work plan and budget will be adjusted at the end of the first cycle on the basis of the results of the mid-term evaluation and any new priorities that the Parties may have identified.

3. Evaluation

73. The evaluation will be conducted through two main mechanisms: a survey-based mid-term evaluation, performed during the first cycle, and a major evaluation, performed during the second cycle. The results of those evaluations will be presented to the Conference of the Parties for its consideration.

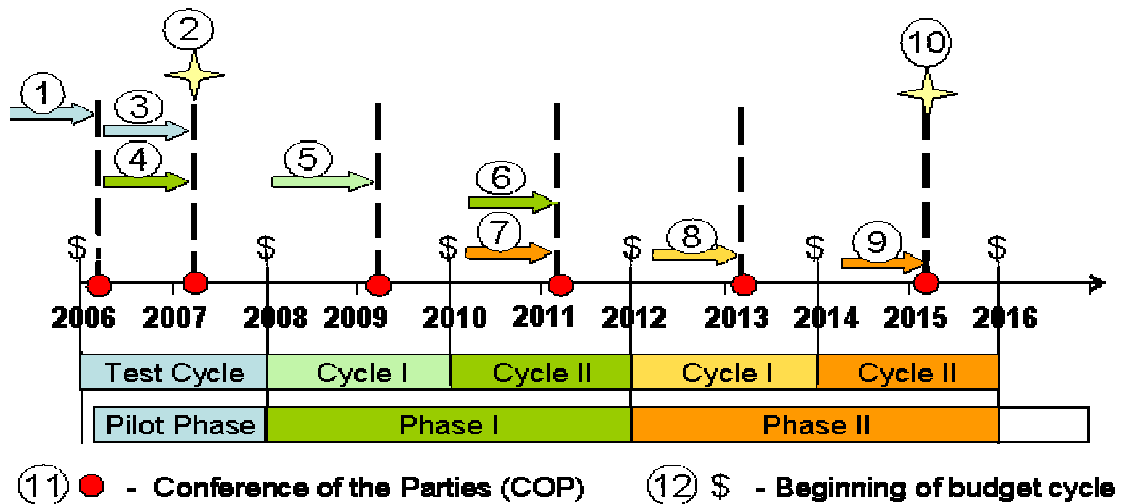
74. The mid-term evaluation is performed with the purpose of reporting progress to the Conference of the Parties and to determine any adjustments that might be required to the work plans and budget for the second cycle.

75. Major evaluations of the clearing-house mechanism may be conducted by an external entity and are aimed at taking stock of progress and assessing the need to enhance the clearing-house mechanism further.

4. Timeframe

76. Figure 2 below describes the proposed schedule for the clearing-house mechanism phases, cycles and evaluations.

Figure 2: Proposed schedule for clearing-house mechanism



1. **Pilot Phase:** Work plan and budget.
2. Endorsement of the clearing-house mechanism strategic plan by the Conference of the Parties at its third meeting.
3. Baseline evaluation.
4. **Phase I:** Needs and priorities analysis, work plan and budget for first cycle, indicative work plan and budget for second cycle.
5. **Phase I:** Clearing-house mechanism mid-term evaluation, adjustments to the priorities, work plan and budget for second cycle.
6. **Phase I:** Clearing-house mechanism major evaluation.
7. **Phase II:** Needs and priorities analysis, work plan and budget for first cycle, indicative work plan and budget for second cycle.
8. **Phase II:** Clearing-house mechanism mid-term evaluation, adjustments to the priorities, work plan and budget for second cycle.
9. **Phase II:** Clearing-house mechanism major evaluation.
10. Decision on the need for a new clearing-house mechanism strategic plan.

VII. Performance Indicators

77. Performance indicators are revised at the beginning of each phase and during the evaluation. The final evaluation for each objective is based on an analysis of indicators and on an expert judgement of the success of each of the objectives outlined in chapter V above.

VIII. Funding Issues

78. [To be developed]

Annex I

Analysis of information exchange and management requirements under the Convention

	Shaded cells refer to reporting obligations under Article 15
	White cells refer to explicit information exchange under that Article
N/D	Not yet defined

Article	Status ⁶	From	To	Information
3.1.(a) Intentional prod.& use	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Legal and administrative measures to eliminate production, use, import and export of Annex A Chemicals
3.1.(b) Intentional prod.& use	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Legal and administrative measures to restrict production and use of Annex B Chemicals
3.2.(a) Intentional prod.& use	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Measures to ensure import only for disposal or under exemption for Annex A, B Chemicals
3.2.(b), 3.2.(c) Intentional prod.& use	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Measures to ensure export only for disposal, under exemption or for acceptable purposes for Annex A, B Chemicals
3.2.(b) (iii) Intentional prod.& use	Mandatory	Exporting Party	Secretariat	Importing State certification and supporting documentation
3.2.(b) (iii) Intentional prod.& use	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties having regulatory & assessment schemes	Secretariat (COP)	Measures to regulate with the aim of preventing production & use of potential new POPs
3.6 Intentional prod.& use	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties having a specific exemption	Secretariat (COP)	Measures to prevent/minimize exposure and release of Annex A, B Chemicals
4.1 Register of exemptions	Mandatory	Secretariat	Public	Register of specific exemptions (Annex A,B)
4.3 Register of exemptions	Mandatory	Party requiring a specific exemption	Secretariat	Notification requesting exemption (Annex A,B)

⁶ "(Art. 15)" indicates that this information is to be reflected in national reports pursuant to Article 15.

Article	Status ⁶	From	To	Information
4.6 Register of exemptions	Mandatory	Party requiring a specific exemption	Secretariat ->public	Report justifying continuing need for exemption (Annex A,B)
4.6 SC-1/24.2 Register of exemptions	Mandatory	Secretariat	All Parties	- Copy of report justifying continuing need for exemption - Request for other available information, in English
4.6 SC-1/24.2 Register of exemptions	Mandatory	Parties (having information)	Secretariat	Other information relevant to report
4.6	Mandatory	Secretariat	All Parties	All collected information relevant to report and translated as necessary
4.6	Mandatory	Secretariat	All Parties	Recommendations and any report by group of experts
5.(a) Unintentional production	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Action plan to identify, characterize and address the releases of chemicals listed in Annex C
5.(a)(i) Unintentional production	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Source inventories & release estimates of chemicals listed in Annex C
5.(b) Unintentional production	Optional	Parties	National stakeholders & secretariat	Promotional materials on measures for release reduction and source elimination of chemicals listed in Annex C
5.(c) Unintentional production	Optional	Parties	national stakeholders & secretariat	Promotional materials on development and use of substitute materials, products and processes to prevent formation and releases of chemicals listed in Annex C
5.(d)(e) Unintentional production	Optional	Secretariat (COP)	Parties, public	Guidelines on best available techniques and provisional guidance on best environmental practices relevant to Article 5 and Annex C of the Stockholm Convention (BAT/BEP guidelines)
5.(d)(e) Unintentional production	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Measures to implement BAT/BEP guidelines (for part II new sources) and promote BAT/BEP

Article	Status ⁶	From	To	Information
5.(d)(e) Unintentional production	Optional	Parties	national stakeholders & Secretariat	Promotional materials & measures to use BAT/BEP
5.(g) Unintentional production		Secretariat (COP)	Parties	Release thresholds & performance standards (Annex C)
6.1.(a) Stockpiles & wastes	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Party	Secretariat (COP)	Strategies for identification of stockpiles, products/articles in use, wastes
6.1.(b) Stockpiles & wastes	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Party	Secretariat (COP)	Inventory of stockpiles (Annex A,B)
6.1.(c) Stockpiles & wastes	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Party	Secretariat (COP)	Measures to manage stockpiles in safe, efficient and environmental sound manner
6.1.(d) Stockpiles & wastes	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Party	Secretariat (COP)	Measures to manage wastes in environmentally sound manner
Stockpiles & wastes	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Party	Secretariat (COP)	Inventory of destruction or irreversible transformation of POPs
6.1.(d)(ii) Stockpiles & wastes	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Party	Secretariat (COP)	Strategies for identification of contaminated sites
6.1.(e) Stockpiles & wastes	Optional	Party	Secretariat (COP)	Inventory of contaminated sites
6.2.(a) Stockpiles & wastes	Mandatory	Secretariat (COP, Basel)	Parties	Standards on wastes destruction & transformation levels
6.2.(b) Stockpiles & wastes	Mandatory	Secretariat (COP, Basel)	Parties	Environmentally sound disposal methods
6.2.(c) Stockpiles & wastes	Mandatory	Secretariat (COP, Basel)	Parties	Low POPs content levels definition and thresholds
7 National implementation plans	Mandatory	Secretariat (COP)	Parties	Guidance for developing national implementation plans
7 National implementation plans	Mandatory	Secretariat (COP)	Parties	Guidance on social and economic assessment of national implementation plans
7 National implementation plans	Mandatory	Secretariat (COP)	Parties	Guidance on action plan costs calculations
7 National implementation plans	Mandatory	Secretariat (COP)	Parties	Guidance on action plans for specific POPs

Article	Status ⁶	From	To	Information
7 National implementation plans	Mandatory	Secretariat (COP)	Parties	Roster of experts (action plan related)
7 National implementation plans	Mandatory	Secretariat (COP)	Parties	Guidance for review and updating of national implementation plans
7.1 National implementation plans	Mandatory	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	National implementation plans
7 National implementation plans	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Party	Secretariat (COP)	Report on national implementation plans implementation and effectiveness
7.3 National implementation plans	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Party	Secretariat (COP)	Measures to integrate national implementation plans in national sustainable development strategies
8.1 8.2 Listing of chemicals	Optional	Party	Secretariat (POPs Review Committee)	Proposal for listing a chemical in Annexes A, B, C
8.4.(a) Listing of chemicals	Mandatory	Secretariat (POPs Review Committee)	Parties, observers	Proposal for listing a chemical in Annexes A, B, C POPs Review Committee evaluation & recommendation
8.4.(a) Listing of chemicals	Optional	Parties, Observers	Secretariat (POPs Review Committee)	Information for risk profile
8.5 Listing of chemicals	Optional	Party	Secretariat (POPs Review Committee)	Resubmission, concerns and justification for additional consideration Challenge the decision of the Review Committee at COP meeting
8.6 Listing of chemicals	Mandatory	Secretariat (POPs Review Committee)	Parties, observers	Draft risk profile
8.6 Listing of chemicals	Optional	Parties, observers	Secretariat (POPs Review Committee)	Technical comments on draft risk profile
8.6 8.7.(b) Listing of chemicals	Mandatory	Secretariat (POPs Review Committee)	Parties, observers	Completed risk profile
8.7.(a) Listing of chemicals	Optional	Parties, observers	Secretariat (POPs Review Committee)	Information related to social and economic considerations
8.7.(a) Listing of chemicals	Mandatory	Secretariat (POPs Review Committee)	Parties, observers	Risk management evaluation

Article	Status ⁶	From	To	Information
8.8 Listing of chemicals	Optional	Party	Secretariat (COP)	Request to instruct the Review Committee to invite additional information from Parties & observers
8.8 Listing of chemicals	Optional	Parties, observers	Secretariat (POPS Review Committee)	Requested additional information on inclusion of the chemical in annexes A, B, C
8.9 Listing of chemicals	Mandatory	Secretariat (COP)	Parties, observers	Decision on inclusion of chemical in annexes A, B, C
9.1.(a) Information exchange	Mandatory	Parties	Secretariat, other stakeholders	Information relevant to reduction or elimination of production, use and release of chemicals listed in Annex A, B, C and other POPs
9.1.(b) Information exchange	Mandatory	Parties	Secretariat, other stakeholders	Information relevant to alternatives & their risks and social and economic costs
9.3 Information exchange	Mandatory	Parties	Secretariat (circulation)	Information exchange: national focal point contact details
9.4 Information exchange	Mandatory	Parties, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations	Secretariat (circulation)	Information exchange on POPs
10(a)-(e) 10.3 Public information awareness and education	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Measures to implement Art. 10, including involving industry and professional users, awareness for policy and decision makers, public education and participation, training for workers, managers, scientists etc.
Public information awareness and education	Optional	Parties, representatives of industry and professional users	Secretariat, all stakeholders	Educational and public awareness materials , education and training programmes (national, international)
10 (f)(g) 10.3 Public information awareness and education	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Measures to provide public access to up-to-date information on POPs
10.5 Public information awareness and education	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Measures to introduce mechanisms like pollutant release transfer registers in national data collection and dissemination
11.1 11.2 Research, development and monitoring	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Measures to encourage/undertake and support research, development and monitoring on POPs

Article	Status ⁶	From	To	Information
11.2 (e) Research, development and monitoring	Mandatory	Parties	Public	Results of research, development and monitoring activities
12.2 Technical assistance	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Measures and cooperation activities to provide technical assistance
12 Technical assistance	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Technical assistance received
12.4 Technical assistance	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Measures to promote transfer of technology
13.1 Financial resources and mechanism	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Measures to provide financial support and incentives
13.2 Financial resources and mechanism	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Measures to provide new and additional financial resources
13.3 Financial resources and mechanism	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Information on financial resources provided through bilateral, regional and multilateral sources or channels
15.2 (a) Reporting	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Statistical data on total quantities of production, import and export of chemicals listed in Annex A and B
15.2 (b) Reporting	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	List of States participating in import and export of chemicals listed in Annex A and B
16.2 Effectiveness evaluation	Mandatory	Parties & existing monitoring programmes	Secretariat (COP)	Comparable monitoring data on the presence in the environment of chemicals listed Annex A, B and C
16.2 (a) Effectiveness evaluation	Mandatory	Parties (regionally)?	Parties (regionally)?	Information on monitoring programmes and on harmonization of approaches
16.2 (c) Effectiveness evaluation	Mandatory	Parties (regionally and globally)	Secretariat (COP)	Reports on the results of monitoring activities (regional and global)
17 Non- compliance	Mandatory	N/D	Secretariat (COP)	Non-compliance information
20. (a)(d) Secretariat	Mandatory	Secretariat	All Parties	Meeting documents, reports, decisions

Article	Status ⁶	From	To	Information
Annex A - Elimination Annex B - Restriction - notes ii	Mandatory	Parties (having chemicals as constituents of articles in use)	Secretariat ->public	Notification of constituents of articles remaining in use (Annex A,B)
Annex A - Elimination Annex B - Restriction - notes iii	Mandatory	Parties (closed-system site-limited intermediate)	Secretariat (COP) - >public	Notification of production and use in closed-system site-limited intermediate (Annex A,B)
Annex A - Elimination - Part II	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Measures pursuant to part II of Annex A
Annex A - Elimination - Part II - (g)	Mandatory (Art. 15)	Parties	Secretariat (COP)	Report on progress eliminating PCBs
Annex B - Restriction - Part II - 1, 3	Mandatory	Parties (using or producing DDT)	Secretariat (COP)	Notification to include in DDT register
Annex B - Restriction - Part II - 4	Mandatory	Parties (using or producing DDT)	Secretariat and WHO	Information on DDT use, conditions and relevance for the Party
Annex B - Restriction - Part II - 7	Optional	Parties (in the DDT registry)	Secretariat	Notification of withdrawal from DDT register

Annex II

The information-exchange needs of Parties

Introduction

1. In addition to the requirements of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants relating to information exchange, Parties have identified specific information needs on various occasions, such as at the subregional workshops on support for the implementation of the Convention held in 2001 and 2002 and at subsequent meetings, including workshops for national focal points. Furthermore, the national implementation plans submitted to the Secretariat to date have identified the need for assistance in the implementation of the Convention in the form of information relating to persistent organic pollutants (POPs). In accordance with decision INC.6/7 of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for an International Legally Binding Instrument for Implementing International Action on Certain Persistent Organic Pollutants, Governments have submitted comments to the Secretariat related to the design, development, operation and scope of a clearing-house mechanism for information exchange on POPS, including views on its necessary content.

2. The following analysis of Parties' needs for information exchange is based exclusively on the information contained in the documents listed in the appendix to the present annex; to date, no systematic collection of this type of information has taken place. The analysis, therefore, is neither comprehensive nor exhaustive. Moreover, it should be noted that some of the information dates back a few years and that the development and implementation of the Convention through national implementation plans will create new needs that will have to be addressed as they emerge. It should also be noted that the needs for information and information exchange listed below were often expressed in contexts other than in connection with the clearing-house mechanism; it should not be assumed, therefore, that the clearing-house mechanism is the sole means of exchanging information. Nevertheless, it is possible to draw some conclusions from the information presented below for the purpose of defining the range of information needed to identify potential improvements of the clearing-house.

3. Although the identified needs for information and information exchange have been organized to reflect the structure of the Convention, they may have been expressed in a different context. Some information needs were expressed by several sources but in different terms, such as the need to create and further foster regional and subregional cooperation and information exchange; where possible and appropriate, these needs have been reformulated to reflect a single need, indicating nevertheless the different ways in which the same point was expressed.

I. Intentionally produced POPs (Articles 3 and 4)

A. General

4. With respect to pesticides and industrial chemicals, Parties have repeatedly emphasized that information exchange is of paramount importance and that information exchange should include the sharing of experiences between Parties and signatory States.

5. The clearing-house should include information on POPs research and studies. International mechanisms to promote research activities and data exchange should be established and the dissemination of findings of research on intentionally produced POPs should be promoted. Cooperation between systems involved in the research, development, monitoring and exchange of information on POPs both regionally and internationally should be fostered.

6. An information database on intentionally produced POPs should be developed. The clearing-house mechanism could also cover toxic chemicals that are not subject to the Convention.

7. Information regarding the illegal import, export and use could be exchanged through the clearing-house mechanism.

B. Alternatives

8. Assistance is needed with regard to providing access to a comprehensive list of pesticides which can be used as alternatives to POPs. Information exchange – at least in the subregions – on how to produce and use alternatives to POPs would be useful. It has been suggested that a database on chemical substitutes to POPs, including information on the environmental risks associated with using those substitutes and on their economic and social impact and costs, should be developed in the context of the clearing-house mechanism.

9. Information exchange on research and development regarding alternatives to DDT is needed, as is information on successful programmes to eliminate the use of DDT and on best practices to reduce resistance to DDT.

C. Information related to specific substances

10. In particular with respect to polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), there is a need for information exchange regarding:

11. Uniform sampling and analytical procedures;
12. Registration of data;
13. Labelling;
14. Hot spot identification and reporting.

II. Unintentionally produced POPs (Article 5)

15. As is the case with intentionally produced POPs, the sharing of experiences within and between subregions and regions with respect to unintentionally produced POPs is of the utmost importance.

16. It has been suggested that there is a need to establish a knowledge base (database, research centre, website) and to initiate the development of a global information database on unintentionally produced POPs, including a directory of experts on unintentionally produced POPs who are available for consultation.

17. In addition, international and regional hotline support, networking and access to computers and software could be envisaged.

18. Information related to the development of an action plan to identify, characterize and address releases of unintentionally produced POPs and to facilitate the implementation of practical measures to reduce releases and eliminate sources is essential.

19. With respect to best available techniques and best environmental practices, general knowledge transfer is needed, as is information on the best available techniques and best environmental practices used in developed countries to manage unintentionally produced POPs.

III. Stockpiles, wastes and contaminated sites (Article 6)

20. Exchange of information and sharing of national and international experiences with respect to the management of stockpiles and wastes is needed. In addition, information on the management of alternatives to unused and obsolete chemicals, other wastes and priority chemicals is necessary.

21. Parties need information related to the identification of contaminated sites, such as criteria for identifying contaminated sites, methodology for the risk assessment of contaminated sites and options for remediation measures. Information is also needed on remediation techniques for sites which are contaminated with chemicals.

22. Information on existing projects may be useful.

IV. Other technical information

23. In addition to the information needs listed with respect to Articles 3–6, Parties have indicated that they need more general information regarding the management of chemicals, including information on:

1. Environmental behaviour of chemicals, including pesticides;
2. International safety data sheets;
3. Internationally recognized databases.

V. National implementation plans (Article 7)

24. Given that there is an obvious need to exchange national experiences in preparing and implementing national implementation plans, workshops have been held to address this need. Specific questions, for example on how countries integrate their national implementation plans into other national environmental action plans and policies, could be addressed in more detail.

VI. Information exchange and public awareness (Articles 9 and 10)

25. National focal points, to be designated pursuant to Article 9 of the Convention, could be established at all levels of Government.

26. The development and implementation of national implementation plans should include the appointment of a national focal point to provide for information exchange on the basis of a network of interacting organizations, including governmental, research, non-governmental, monitoring, international and other organizations. New information technologies should be used for these purposes, including databases, internet technologies and others.

27. There should be improved communication and information exchange between the national focal points for the different conventions, in order to promote the integration of activities under Stockholm Convention and other related instruments.

28. With respect to the obligation to raise public awareness on POPs, the need for sharing country experiences of successes and failures has been highlighted. This could be done, inter alia, through the publication of a booklet on good practices and success stories.

29. Information on experiences with national pollutant release and transfer registers is also needed.

30. To promote public awareness, national or local information and documentation centres could be established. Any materials produced to raise public awareness could be exchanged through the clearing-house mechanism.

31. Finally, the need to help countries strengthen public awareness of existing and planned projects through the media has been identified.

VII. Enhanced cooperation at the subregional, regional and inter-regional levels with respect to information exchange

32. A number of the documents⁷ surveyed for the present analysis include recommendations for enhanced cooperation at the regional and subregional levels in the area of information exchange. In most regions, there seems to be a need for increased information exchange among Parties on issues related to POPs and for developing strategies and mechanisms to facilitate the exchange of data, information and expertise, for example using the internet. These strategies and mechanisms could also include the establishment of discussion forums on themes relating to the Convention, possibly at the regional level using the internet or other networks. It has also been proposed to develop regional or subregional action plans for sharing information on POPs and other hazardous chemicals.

⁷

A list of references is contained in the appendix to the present annex.

33. Information exchange could prove to be of practical use for the Parties with respect to laboratory facilities. For example, information could be exchanged on existing authorized laboratories for screening activities and on databases or lists of disposal facilities and other laboratories in each subregion or region.

34. Another area for potential strengthened regional cooperation is project development and implementation. The exchange of information between countries that are advanced in the project procedure (development and implementation) could be helpful. The dissemination of information on the current status of implementation of a given project and its expected or actual results could be helpful to other countries in the region working on similar projects.

35. Generally, regional exchange of information and experiences relating to the management and final disposal of POPs should be encouraged. In this sense, regional and subregional centres for collection, exchange and sharing of information such as information on legal instruments and standards and information on available facilities for treatment and disposal could be established and guidelines on how they should operate could be developed. Existing regional and subregional centres involved in training, information and technology transfer could be strengthened to meet the requirements of national implementation plans.

VIII. Technical assistance

36. The following additional needs for information and exchange of information have been identified with regard to technical assistance:

- Manuals, procedures and good management practices of leading organizations on chemicals management should be made available;
- Assistance should be provided with regard to the acquisition of specific support in the field of information technology, such as CD-ROMS, hardware and software;
- Information should be provided on the scope of national authorities' competences;
- A roster of national and international experts on chemicals management should be drawn up, including information about the experts' fields of expertise.

37. UNEP materials and documents should be distributed regularly and not just at the time of meetings and workshops. It should be made available to the public free of charge in libraries and on the internet.

38. The Chemical Information Exchange Network (CIEN) project is necessary for the exchange of information on chemicals and for the development of technical infrastructure; it should therefore be extended to other countries.

39. Finally, the clearing-house could include information related to the issues listed in paragraph 10 of decision SC-1/15 on technical assistance, as set forth in annex I to the report of the Conference of the Parties on the work of its first meeting (UNEP/POPS/COP.1/31). Many of those issues are listed above.

Appendix

List of references

- Proceedings of the regional workshop on capacity-building for Stockholm Convention focal points, Marrakech, Morocco, 28 February–4 March 2005.
 - Proceedings of the workshop on implementation of the Stockholm Convention in developed countries, Neuchâtel, Switzerland, 16–18 June 2004.
(<http://www.pops.int/documents/implementation/gef/Neuchproc.pdf>).
 - Overview and summary of outcomes of the subregional workshops on support for the implementation of the Stockholm Convention working groups, a Global Environmental Facility Medium-Sized Project.
(<http://www.pops.int/documents/implementation/gef/mspoverview.pdf>).
 - Propuesta de trabajo para el establecimiento de una red nacional de intercambio de información de COPs y otros Productos Químicos, La Habana, Cuba, Diciembre 2004.
 - National implementation plans submitted by Latvia, the Republic of Moldova and the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia.
(<http://www.pops.int/documents/implementation/nips/submissions/default.htm>).
 - UNEP/POPS/INC.7/INF/28: The Chemical Information Exchange Network (CIEN) Project: Capacity-building for the Sound Management of Chemicals.
 - UNEP/POPS/COP.1/31: Report of the Conference of the Parties of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants on the work of its first meeting.
 - UNEP/POPS/INC.7/INF/16: Submissions received in response to Committee Decisions INC-6/3, INC-6/7, INC-6/8, INC-6/9, INC-6/10, INC-6/11, INC-6/13 and INC-6/16.
 - UNEP/POPS/INC.7/12: Work plan and budget for the initiation and maintenance of a clearing-house mechanism for information exchange on persistent organic pollutants.
 - UNEP/POPS/INC.7/28: Report of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for an International Legally Binding Instrument for Implementing International Action on Certain Persistent Organic Pollutants on the work of its seventh session.
-