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MEA-REN

Multilateral Environmental Agreements — Regional Environmental Network



NEWS FLASH

Introduction

The MEA-REN News Flash has been created with an aim to raise awareness on the project implementation and activities and to produce an update on the latest developments, cooperative efforts and current news. Future developments of the News Flash will focus on including information sent by individual countries participants to the project.



Smuggling of electronic waste in Tian Jin, China
Source: China Customs

MEA Regional Enforcement Network

The aim of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements Regional Enforcement Network (MEA-REN) is to enable participating countries in Northeast, South and Southeast Asia to combat illegal trade and gain better control of transboundary movements of hazardous chemicals and waste. The project covers four treaties: the Montreal Protocol and the Stockholm, Rotterdam and Basel Conventions. The network is an extension of the previously established Ozone Depleting Substances - Customs Network in 2002. The MEA-REN project started in 2007 and will end in 2010. The project is funded by Sweden.

Participating countries: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China (People's Republic of), Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Korea (Democratic People's Republic of), Korea (Republic of), Lao PDR, Malaysia, Maldives, Myanmar, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vietnam.

1st MEA Workshop

The first MEA-REN Workshop was held 8-10 November 2007 in Bali, Indonesia. Participants included ozone and customs officers from 22 countries, MEA representatives from 9 countries, United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI), Regional Intelligence Liaison Office for Asia and the Pacific (RILO A/P), United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), World Customs Organization Asia Pacific Regional Office for Capacity Building (WCO ROCB A/P), Basel Convention Regional Centre for South-East Asia (BCRC A/P), Japan Ministry of Environment, Swedish Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), The World Bank, United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA), and the American Embassy in Thailand

Topics for discussion of the workshop in brief:

- Customs focal point for chemicals issues in each participating country
- National MEA Representatives in countries that have ratified the Rotterdam & Basel Conventions
- Modalities for regional and national information exchange and informal networking
- Improved data on transboundary movements of ODS and hazardous chemicals and waste
- Management tools
- Cross-border customs cooperation
- Good cooperation with Regional Partners

More information about the recommendations and conclusions can be found in the workshop's report.

E-Forum

An E-forum was launched in February 2008 for the members of the MEA REN project to share non-confidential information in an informal way. Countries are recommended to exchange operative information about illegal trade via the Customs channel (WCO Customs Enforcement Network) and/or Interpol's ECO-message.

If you have any problem receiving or sending information via the e-forum, please contact Pia Jonsson, e-mail: jonssonp@un.org.
E-Forum: <http://groups.google.com/group/mea-ren>

Country Information Sheet

One of the recommendations of the first MEA-REN workshop was to develop a Country Information Sheet. This would facilitate the national and international cooperation on enforcement and allow countries to promptly identify relevant national laws, regulations and rules, the national institutional enforcement structure. It would also allow identifying the power of different enforcement authorities in enforcement and investigation and which agency to contact in specific situations where bilateral information exchange between enforcement agencies is needed.



A draft Information Sheet for the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions has been circulated with the countries and the MEA secretariats for comments. Countries will be asked to complete the information and send it to UNEP ROAP before the 2nd MEA- REN Workshop that is to be held in September 2008.

Environmental Crime Media Update

UNEP ROAP has launched an electronic media update weekly service for members of the MEA-REN project, the Asian Regional Partner's Forum on Combating Environmental Crime and other networks and/or organizations that have an interest and follow environmental crime issues. The goal of Environmental Crime Media Update is to provide its readers with current news relating to environmental crime. It will cover news from several sources related to pollution and wildlife crimes and will also focus on the links of environmental crime to other criminal activities and organized crimes.

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UNEP/ROAP

Cooperation

To strengthen the cooperation on illegal trade in hazardous chemicals and waste UNEP ROAP has informed other networks in the region and in Europe about the MEA-REN project.

Workshop of Asian Network for Prevention of Illegal Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Waste

The Asian Network for Prevention of Illegal transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes aims at facilitating the exchange and dissemination of information on trans-boundary movements of hazardous wastes and selected used products among North-east and South-east Asian countries.

It also assists participating countries in formulating an appropriate legislative response to such movements under each country's system taking into consideration necessary procedures required by the Basel Convention.

Participating Countries include Cambodia, China, China (Hong Kong SAR), Indonesia, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand and Vietnam.

The 4th Workshop of the Asian Network for Prevention of Illegal Trans-boundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes was held in Tokyo, on January 28-30, 2008 and was organized by the Ministry of the Environment of Japan.

Participants focused discussions on the exchange of information and experience, especially regulation on waste criteria and good practices for effective enforcement for enforcement to prevent illegal transboundary movement of wastes.

Both MEA-REN and the Asian Network keep each other informed about their mutual activities, and look forward to possible cooperation in the future.

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Smuggling of worn storage battery in Chang Chun, China
Source: China Customs

IMPEL-TFS Conference in Bulgaria

IMPEL-TFS is a network for representatives from enforcement authorities of the European Union's Member States and some other European countries dealing with matters on Transfrontier Shipments of Waste. It was set up in 1992 in order to harmonize the enforcement of the EU regulation, which includes the provisions of the Basel Convention, on shipments of waste. One of the strategic goals of the programme is to improve the cooperation with countries that receive waste leaving Europe, for example Asia. Several enforcement projects concerning illegal trade in waste issues have been initiated by IMPEL-TFS and the network has established and activated IMPEL-TFS National Contact Points.

The annual IMPEL-TFS Conference was this year organized by the Bulgarian Ministry of Environment and Water and by the IMPEL-TFS Steering Committee in Sofia, Bulgaria 23-25 April 2008. 95 participants from 28 countries mainly from Europe but also from China and Thailand and Nigeria attended the conference.

Representatives from UNEP-secretariat of the Basel Convention, the Basel Convention Regional Centre in Nigeria, the Asian Network, Interpol, RILO A/P and representatives from the industry attended as well. The MEA Regional Enforcement Network project and the Regional Partner's Forum on Environmental Crime were presented by UNEP ROAP.

The main aim of the conference was to stimulate cooperation between European countries and third countries in Asia and Africa and to reach an efficient collaboration between waste enforcement authorities, police and customs.

IMPEL-TFS, RILO Asia/Pacific and UNEP ROAP have started a discussion on how to strengthen the cooperation between Asia and Europe by linking the IMPEL-TFS E-waste project with the project "Sky-Hole-Patching".

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More information:
http://ec.europa.eu/environment/impel/impel_tfs.htm

POPs Workshop

The Regional Capacity Building Programme for Health Risk Management of Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in South East Asia is a project funded by the Canadian International Development Agency and implemented by the World Bank. The aims are to strengthen the capacity of government agencies responsible for management of chemicals to assess and economically evaluate health risks from exposure to POPs. This will help countries to prioritize measures aimed at better managing health impacts from POPs and other chemicals by gathering quantitative data from case studies on direct exposures to chemicals at selected hotspots and compiling secondary information on impacts from transboundary movements of persistent chemicals. One component of the project is Regional Cooperation with focus on export/import and illegal trafficking of POPs.

UNEP/ROAP informed about the MEA-REN project at the launch POPs workshop of the project in Luang Prabang, Lao PDR, 3-5 April 2008. The World Bank and the Water Resources and Environment Agency of Lao PDR jointly hosted the workshop. A total of 42 participants attended, including representatives from the participating countries (Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, Thailand, and Vietnam).

Hatfield Consultants, the international consulting firm selected to carry out the risk assessment and training components of the Programme has set up a website for the project that will be ultimately hosted by the World Bank after its completion.

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UNEP/ROAP



Seizure of illegally imported CFC-12 at the Port of Bangkok

Source: Piyanee Thangtongtawi, Department of Industrial Works Ministry of Industry, Thailand

ARPEC

The Regional Partners Forum on Combating Environmental Crime in Asia and the Pacific was created in August 2005 and involves representatives from nine different International Organizations that share the same aims and goals and that wish to cooperate together to effectively combat environmental crime in this Region.

The focus of the forum is on facilitating mutual consultation, enhancing enforcement cooperation, promoting information exchange and coordinating technical cooperation.

To respond to environmental crime in the region, a few Regional Projects and Programmes have been developed. One example of the work of the Forum is "Project Sky Hole Patching" focusing on control of suspicious shipments of ODS and hazardous waste. It was implemented by Customs Administrations in the Region, monitored by WCO RILO A/P with support from UNEP, and input from the Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA). At present, a joint regional Programme is being developed to simultaneously combat several interlinked transnational crimes such as the illicit trafficking in drugs, people, wildlife, timber, ozone depleting substances and waste.

MEDIA UPDATE

Industry Cautions against Illegal Import of HCFCs

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The Alliance for Responsible Atmospheric Policy cautioned industry and the public to be certain that their hydrochlorofluorocarbon (HCFC) refrigerant purchases are legal, and to refuse to buy illegally imported refrigerants. The warning came as reports are beginning to surface that illegal HCFC imports may be on the rise, in light of apparent demand for the product to service air conditioning equipment.

Purchasers of new HCFCs should verify that an importer is authorized to import HCFCs. Such importers would have been listed as having a baseline consumption allowance in the EPA HCFC Allocation Rule (January 21, 2003; 68 FR 2819), or involved in a subsequent legal trade of consumption allowances. An updated list of allowance holders can be found at:

<http://epa.gov/ozone/title6/allowance.html>.

The recipient of a trade can show a letter from EPA acknowledging the approval of the trade. Purchasers who question the legitimacy of an HCFC importer should request a copy of the EPA approval letter from the seller. Persons involved in the illegal trade of HCFCs are subject to both civil and criminal penalties. Fines of \$32,5000 per kilogram can be imposed.

Source: The Alliance for Responsible Atmospheric Policy, Information Release, 21 May 2008, <http://www.arap.org/>

CFC production discontinues in India from 1 August 2008

India will accelerate the phase out of the CFC production from 1 August 2008, 17 months in advance to their 1 January 2010 target. This would be implemented in the four remaining CFC producing companies namely SRF Limited, Chemplast Sanmar Limited, Navin Fluorine Industries and Gujarat Fluorochemicals Limited.

An agreement will be finalised during the 55th Meeting of the Executive Committee, Bangkok, which is proposed to be held between 14-18 July 2008.

Under this agreement, India would produce not more than 690 metric tonnes of CFCs, which would be primarily for the manufacturing of metered-dose inhalers (MDI), until 1 August 2008 and would also export stocks of 1,228 MT of CFCs available as of 31 December 2007 no later than 31 December 2009.

Source: Report of 54th Executive Committee
http://www.multilateralfund.org/54th_meeting_of_the_executive_.htm

European Union protects the environment through criminal law

The member states of the European Union are to fight environmental crime more consistently. The Justice and Home Affairs Council on 6 June 2008 approved a directive on the protection of the environment through criminal law, after reaching an agreement at first reading with the European Parliament under the co-decision procedure.

The Directive provides for serious violations of community environmental law to be treated as criminal offences and sanctioned accordingly across the EU. It covers a wide range of environmental crimes, which can cause death or serious injury to any person or substantial damage to the environment – such as the illegal disposal or emission of hazardous substances into the air, water or soil, the illegal shipment of waste or illegal trade in endangered species.

Member States will have to ensure that these offences are punishable by effective, proportionate and dissuasive criminal penalties. Inciting or aiding and abetting such conduct will equally be considered a criminal act.

The directive establishes a minimum set of actions that should be considered as criminal offences throughout the EU. The level of penalties to be imposed is left to the discretion of member states. The directive will be formally adopted by the Parliament and the Council at a later stage.

Source: The Council of the European Union,
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/jha/100983.pdf,
http://www.consilium.europa.eu/cms3_fo/focusView.ASP?lang=en

UPCOMING EVENTS

2nd MEA-REN Workshop

The 2nd MEA-REN Workshop will be held from 24 to 26 September 2008 in Bangkok, Thailand.

The main objectives of the workshop are to identify and share information about the latest trends of illegal trade in hazardous chemicals and waste, to share experiences of successful enforcement and stimulate cooperation within the region and with other regions as Central Asia and Europe and to reach an efficient collaboration between enforcement authorities, police and customs

6th International Conference on Environmental Crime and Wildlife Crime and Pollution Working Group Meetings

The INTERPOL General Secretariat will be hosting the 6th International Conference on Environmental Crime and Pollution Working Group meetings in Lyon, France from 13-17 October 2008.

The Conference will bring together law enforcement officers from around the world to share their expertise, knowledge and insights and coordinate cooperative capacity building and operational initiatives. The goal of this event is to enhance criminal enforcement of environmental laws. The conference will focus on issues that are common and topical to both wildlife and pollution crime.

More Information:
<http://www.interpol.int/Public/EnvironmentalCrime/Default.asp>

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