

CSD18/ Chemicals and waste management

Intervention by Dr Hannele Pokka, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of the Environment, Finland

Distinguished ministers, dear colleagues,

I am pleased to take part in this round table discussion on chemicals and waste management as this is an area of great importance to Finland;

Finland is committed to achieving the goal agreed upon at the Johannesburg summit whereby chemicals are produced and used in ways that minimize significant adverse impacts on the environment and human health by the year 2020.

In order to do this we have agreed on a national chemicals programme which has been in place since 2006 and which takes into account the effects on consumers, public health, workers' health and safety, and the effects on the environment during the entire lifecycle of chemicals.

In Finland, measures to use and manage chemicals in a sound manner mainly stem from the implementation of European Union and international regulatory frameworks.

As a country in the Northern hemisphere we are on the receiving end of long range transport of hazardous substances such as persistent organic pollutants and some heavy metals, particularly mercury.

Finland as a coastal state to the Baltic Sea participates actively in common efforts to protect this sensitive marine environment. Environment ministers are meeting this month to strengthen the 2007 Baltic Sea Action Plan implementation on minimizing the effects of hazardous substances to the Baltic Sea.

Because of the vulnerability of our Northern environment, it is of specific interest to us to find efficient global solutions to such environmental problems. We have therefore been actively involved in the development and implementation of multilateral environmental agreements in the field of hazardous substances; particularly regarding the Stockholm, Rotterdam and Basel conventions.

We think the historic joint meeting of the ExCOPs of these three conventions is very encouraging in that Parties for the first time came together to decide on how to make implementation of these three conventions stronger.

The ExCOPs are important in many ways, as a means of cementing synergies among the three conventions but also a very promising precedent for international environmental governance.

However, we still need to work on strengthening the linkages between SAICM and the chemicals and waste conventions so that countries can be assisted in more coherent implementation.

We also need to continue our efforts to lessen the problems emanating from the movement of hazardous waste, including illegal traffic.

It is important that national waste management is part of capacity-building activities within the Bali strategic plan implementation.

The last challenge that I will address today is that we should halt the growth in waste volumes. This requires us to turn our attention to the production and consumption and resource efficiency. Here I see a clear link between our current topic and our discussions on sustainable consumption and production patterns.

Thank you, madam/mister chairman.