



Factsheet

The Waigani Convention

What is the Waigani Convention?

The Convention to Ban the Importation into Forum Island Countries of Hazardous and Radioactive Wastes and to Control the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within the South Pacific Region opened for signature in Waigani, Papua New Guinea in 1995 and entered into force in 2001. SPREP serves as the Convention's Secretariat while the Secretary General of the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat serves as Depositary.

Who are its Parties?

The Convention is open to all Pacific island Forum countries. As of June 2008, there are 13 Parties: Australia, Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Fiji, Kiribati, New Zealand, Niue, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu and Vanuatu. France, Marshall Islands, United Kingdom and the United States are eligible to join the convention but have not yet done so. Nauru and Palau signed the convention in 1995 but have yet to ratify.

What are the purposes of the Convention?

- To reduce or eliminate transboundary movements of hazardous and radioactive wastes into and within the Pacific Forum region;
- To minimize the production of hazardous and toxic wastes in the Pacific Forum region;
- To ensure that disposal of wastes is done in an environmentally sound manner and as close to the source as possible; and
- To assist Pacific island countries that are Parties to the Convention in the environmentally sound management

of hazardous and other wastes they generate.

What substances are covered by the Convention?

The Convention covers toxic, poisonous, explosive, corrosive, flammable, ecotoxic, infectious and radioactive wastes.

What are the general obligations on countries?

Countries should ban the import of hazardous and radioactive wastes. They should minimize the production of hazardous wastes and cooperate to ensure that wastes are treated and disposed of in an environmentally sound manner.

What are the economic and social benefits of the Convention?

There are many reasons why the Waigani Convention is important for the region:

- It provides an effective protective mechanism to stop waste traders from making the Pacific an international waste dump.
- It will prevent ships from using the Pacific as a highway for hazardous waste
- It will create a regional mechanism to facilitate the clean up of hazardous and radioactive wastes in the region.

The major benefit of the Convention is the establishment of a system to prevent hazardous and radioactive waste entering the region or being dumped in your country. A significant but less tangible direct benefit is the reduced risk from a potential hazardous or nuclear waste disaster.



Discarded auto batteries, oil drums, industrial solvents...



...heavy metals, pesticides, computer monitors. These are just a few of the hazardous wastes in the Pacific covered by the Waigani Convention.

Parties are able to feel more secure in the knowledge that the risk of a shipping disaster is far less likely.

What are the costs associated with the Convention?

Parties to the Convention pay a nominal administrative fee every two years to the Secretariat based on an agreed formula.

What personnel will be required to administer the Convention?

The Convention requires that each Party identifies a Competent Authority and a Focal Point. The amount of staff time required to administer the Convention will depend on the volume of waste being held or transported. As a minimum, a country may need to allocate some time to customs officials, a Focal Point and possibly a scientist/engineer. SPREP may be able to assist in some of the functions required.

Is national legislation required?

Yes. This legislation is similar in format to legislation required to administer the Basel Convention. The Basel Convention Secretariat has produced model legislation that is useful for purposes of the Waigani Convention.

What are the reporting requirements?

The Convention describes various forms of information that should be transmitted between countries and to the Secretariat. These include: export notifications; written consent or disapproval for import applications; movement documentation; accident notification; and information on the sound management of wastes.

Is help available to administer the Convention?

SPREP, as the Secretariat of the Waigani Convention, undertakes training throughout the region. This helps Pacific Island countries develop the capacity to manage their wastes in an environmentally sound manner.

What is the status of the Convention?

The Convention entered into force in 2001. The Conference of Parties meets biennially.

How does the Waigani Convention fit into the international hazardous waste control regime?

The Waigani Convention is very similar to the Basel Convention, which serves as the primary international instrument governing the transboundary movement and the environmental management of hazardous wastes.



The major difference lies in the fact that Waigani is administered within the Pacific Forum region. This means that Pacific Island countries have a significant say in how the Convention will evolve. The Waigani Convention is also different to Basel in that it covers radioactive wastes and extends to the Economic Exclusion Zone (200 nautical miles) rather than the territorial sea (12 nautical miles) under Basel.

Both Conventions are important and complement each other. The Basel Convention draws on the technical expertise of experts from around the world.



For more information, contact:

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