

Q&A

The Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa (Bamako Convention)

What is the Bamako Convention?

The Bamako Convention on the Ban of the Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa (Bamako Convention) is a treaty of African nations prohibiting the import into Africa of any hazardous—including radioactive—waste. The Convention was adopted under the auspices of the Organization of African Unity in 1991 and came into force in 1998.

What is the purpose of the Convention?

The Convention aims to protect human and environmental health by:

- prohibiting the import of all hazardous and radioactive wastes into the African continent, no matter the reason
- minimizing and controlling transboundary movements of hazardous wastes within the African continent
- prohibiting all ocean and inland water dumping or incineration of hazardous wastes
- ensuring that disposal of wastes is conducted in an environmentally sound manner
- promoting cleaner production over the pursuit of a permissible emissions approach based on assimilative capacity assumptions
- establishing the precautionary principle; a principle expressed in the [Rio Declaration](#) which stipulates that, where there are “threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation.”

What does the Convention cover?

The Convention covers more wastes than those covered by the Basel Convention, as it not only includes radioactive wastes but also considers any waste with a listed hazardous characteristic or with a constituent listed as a hazardous waste. The Convention also covers national definitions of hazardous waste. Other products also covered under the Convention include those that have been severely restricted or prohibited.

Membership

The Convention has 29 parties.

What is the structure of the Convention?

The Convention consists of the Member States—or the Conference of Parties—who, at the start of the first meeting of its ordinary session, elect a president, three vice-presidents and a rapporteur. These officers constitute the Bureau of the Conference.

What is the role of the Bureau?

The Bureau of the Bamako Convention is responsible for assisting the president in the general conduct of the business of the Conference. The members of the Bureau are elected by the Conference at every ordinary session.

Why does the Bamako Convention Conference matter?

The worldwide concern about the transboundary movement and disposal of hazardous wastes was heightened in the late 1970s and early 1980s. Expectedly, the major concern was the transboundary shipment of hazardous wastes from industrialized nations for cheap disposal in inadequately prepared sites in developing countries. This concern ignited a new urgency to develop and implement international controls, culminating in a landmark global convention under the United Nations to control the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes and their disposal, commonly called the Basel Convention. The Bamako Convention is a solution and an African response to the perceived legal loopholes and weaknesses of the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal.

What outcomes are expected in 2020?

- The Secretariat of the Bamako Convention and the Republic of Mali are expected to report to parties on the status of the roadmap for the transfer of the Secretariat to Mali.
- The Secretariat will review and adopt a draft decision on the road map and scenarios, including for the personnel and transfer of the Secretariat to a new seat in Bamako, Mali.
- The Conference of the Parties will review and adopt the new proposed list of substances which have been banned, cancelled or refused registration by government regulatory action, or voluntarily withdrawn from registration in the country of manufacture, for human health or environmental reason under paragraph 1(d) of Article 2 of the Bamako Convention.
- A new scale of assessment reflecting balanced contributions among parties to the Convention will be considered.
- The meeting is expected to contribute to ongoing dialogue on synergic and coherent implementation of the hazardous and chemicals-related conventions and frameworks in Africa.
- The meeting is expected to garner the prior appropriate political momentum for the sound management of hazardous waste and chemicals, including plastic in Africa.

How is the Bamako Convention related to other conventions?

Although the Basel and Bamako conventions share similar historical background and goals, there are areas of divergence in their specific provisions. The scope of wastes covered by the Bamako Convention is wider than that of the Basel Convention. In terms of import of waste, the most significant difference between the Basel and Bamako conventions is the total ban imposed by the Bamako Convention upon all imports of hazardous and nuclear wastes into Africa. Other conventions include the Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions which together with Basel cover key elements of cradle-to-grave management of hazardous chemicals, most comprehensively in the case of persistent organic pollutants, which are covered by all three treaties. The cradle-to-grave process touches on all the components of waste management including its generation and by-products, transportation, testing, treatment and disposal.