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## Report by the Secretariat on the review of the synergies arrangements

February 2013

### I. Introduction

1. The present report was prepared on the basis of the terms of reference set out in annex IV to decisions BC-10/29, RC-5/12 and SC-5/27, on enhancing cooperation and coordination among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions (the “2011 synergies decisions”), adopted by the conferences of the parties to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, respectively, in 2011.<sup>1</sup>

2. As stated in the terms of reference, the purpose of the present report is to review how far the arrangements adopted pursuant to the 2011 synergies decisions and the other decisions adopted by the conferences of the parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions on cooperation and coordination between the three conventions,<sup>2</sup> in particular arrangements in respect of joint activities, joint managerial functions and joint services, have contributed to achieving the following objectives:

- (a) Objective 1: Strengthening the implementation of the three conventions at the national, regional and global levels;
- (b) Objective 2: Promoting coherent policy guidance;
- (c) Objective 3: Reducing administrative burden;
- (d) Objective 4: Maximizing the effective and efficient use of resources at all levels;
- (e) Objective 5: Taking into account global concerns and the specific needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition;
- (f) Objective 6: Protecting human health and the environment for the promotion of sustainable development.

3. The report covers the period from May 2009 to August 2012.

4. In line with the terms of reference, a questionnaire was made available to the parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions on 16 May 2012. The questionnaire was posted on the Secretariat website (<http://surveys.pops.int/RA>) and instructions on how to complete it online were provided to the parties. The questionnaire consisted of two sections:

(a) Section A (the Secretariat’s questionnaire), available in the six languages of the United Nations, upon which the present report is based;

(b) Section B (the UNEP and FAO questionnaire), available in English, French and Spanish, which serves as one source of information for an independent report to be prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the

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<sup>1</sup> Background information on the review of the synergies arrangements is provided in document UNEP/FAO/CHW/RC/POPS/EXCOPS.2/2/Add.1.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to the 2011 synergies decisions, the decisions on the subject of cooperation and coordination between the three conventions include decisions IX/10, RC-4/11 and SC-4/34 (the “synergies decisions”) and decisions BC.Ex-1/1, RC.Ex-1/1 and SC.Ex-1/1 (the “omnibus decisions”).

United Nations (FAO) evaluation offices in accordance with section VI of the omnibus decisions and the 2011 synergies decisions.<sup>3</sup>

5. The questionnaire allowed for its completion by more than one point of contact within each party. A user name and a password for each official contact point and focal point for each party was provided to allow access and input to the questionnaire. Once a party had finalized the questionnaire at the national level it was to be submitted by the party's ministry of foreign affairs (or equivalent) by 31 August 2012.

6. The Secretariat's questionnaire consisted of three parts: part I on joint activities; part II on joint managerial functions; and part III on joint services. It aimed at collecting views from parties on whether and how much the synergies arrangements had contributed to the six synergies objectives listed above and any challenges or obstacles experienced in the achievement of those objectives. The questionnaire also invited parties' views on recommendations to parties, the secretariat, UNEP, FAO and other institutions and stakeholders, as appropriate, on steps that could be taken to make the synergies arrangements better contribute to the achievement of the six synergies objectives.

7. The questionnaire was prepared by identifying a total of 29 synergies arrangements, including 18 pertaining to joint activities, clustered in four groups, 7 pertaining to joint managerial functions 4 pertaining to joint services. The appendix to the present report lists these 29 arrangements. For each one, the questionnaire asked whether and how far its implementation had contributed to the achievement of each of the six synergies objectives. Parties had a choice of five terms with which to describe the extent to which the objectives had been achieved ("significantly improved", "improved", "no change", "worse", "significantly worse"). In addition, in order to account for the possibility that some parties might have no opinion about an arrangement, that an arrangement might have had no relevance to a synergies objective or that it might be premature to indicate whether and to what extent an objective had been reached, the questionnaire provided the respondent with the possibility of answering "no opinion" or "not applicable".

8. At the end of each of the three parts of the questionnaire, parties had the opportunity to provide additional information or comments on the challenges or obstacles experienced in the achievement of the six synergies objectives. Parties also had the opportunity to make specific or general recommendations to parties, the secretariat, UNEP, FAO and other institutions and stakeholders, as appropriate, on steps that could be taken to make the synergies arrangements better contribute to the six synergies objectives.

9. Each part of the questionnaire also included an introductory section providing background information on joint activities, joint managerial functions and joint services, with hyperlinks to the Secretariat website where additional information could be found. Furthermore, it was not necessary for parties to answer all the questions: each party could focus on the arrangements that were of most relevance to it.

## II. Review of the completed questionnaires

10. As of 31 October 2012, the following 23 parties had completed the questionnaire online: Andorra, Argentina, Belgium, Bulgaria, Canada, Croatia, France, Georgia, Guatemala, Italy, Madagascar, Malaysia, Mexico, Montenegro, Myanmar, Philippines, Romania, Slovakia, Switzerland, Trinidad and Tobago, Turkey, Ukraine and Uruguay. The present report is based on the information collected from those parties.

11. In addition, the secretariat received the following responses that were not submitted through the completion of the questionnaire online:

(a) Germany submitted three sets of answers to the questionnaire in a separate spreadsheet file because the questionnaire had been completed by the official contact points and focal point of the three conventions separately. Given the format of the electronic questionnaire, and differing responses from the focal points, these answers could not be aggregated when compiling the responses received to the questionnaire and therefore are not reflected in the present report;

(b) Cyprus indicated that the questionnaire did not apply to it because no capacity-building programmes had been developed at the national or regional level and no coordination activities had taken place beyond those already in place.

12. A compilation of the responses provided by the parties (both online and otherwise) in response to the questionnaires is available on the Secretariat website.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> The UNEP and FAO report is set out in document UNEP/FAO/CHW/RC/POPS/EXCOPS.2/INF/5.

13. The regional distribution of the 23 parties that completed and submitted the questionnaire is as follows:

Africa	1 party (4 per cent of the 23 parties)
Asia and the Pacific	3 parties (13 per cent of the 23 parties)
Central and Eastern Europe	4 parties (17 per cent of the 23 parties)
Latin America and the Caribbean	5 parties (22 per cent of the 23 parties)
Western Europe and others	10 parties (44 per cent of the 23 parties)

14. The following sections provide an overview of parties' responses to the questionnaire.

15. Section A provides information on the overall satisfaction of parties with the synergies arrangements as well as their satisfaction with joint activities, joint managerial functions and joint services. Section B provides information on parties' views on the degree to which the six synergies objectives have been achieved through the synergies arrangements. Section C summarizes comments made by parties on challenges or obstacles experienced in the achievement of the six synergies objectives as well as recommendations to parties, the secretariats, UNEP, FAO and other institutions and stakeholders as appropriate, on steps that could be taken to make the synergies arrangements better contribute to the six synergies objectives.

16. Figures illustrating responses to each question on the questionnaire are available on the Secretariat website.<sup>4</sup>

## A. Overall satisfaction with the synergies arrangements

17. Figure 1 illustrates parties' overall satisfaction with the 29 synergies arrangements and with respect to each of the six synergies objectives. In order to take into account the fact that the objective of strengthening the implementation of the three conventions distinguishes between the national, regional and global levels, figure 1 provides the level of satisfaction for each level as well.

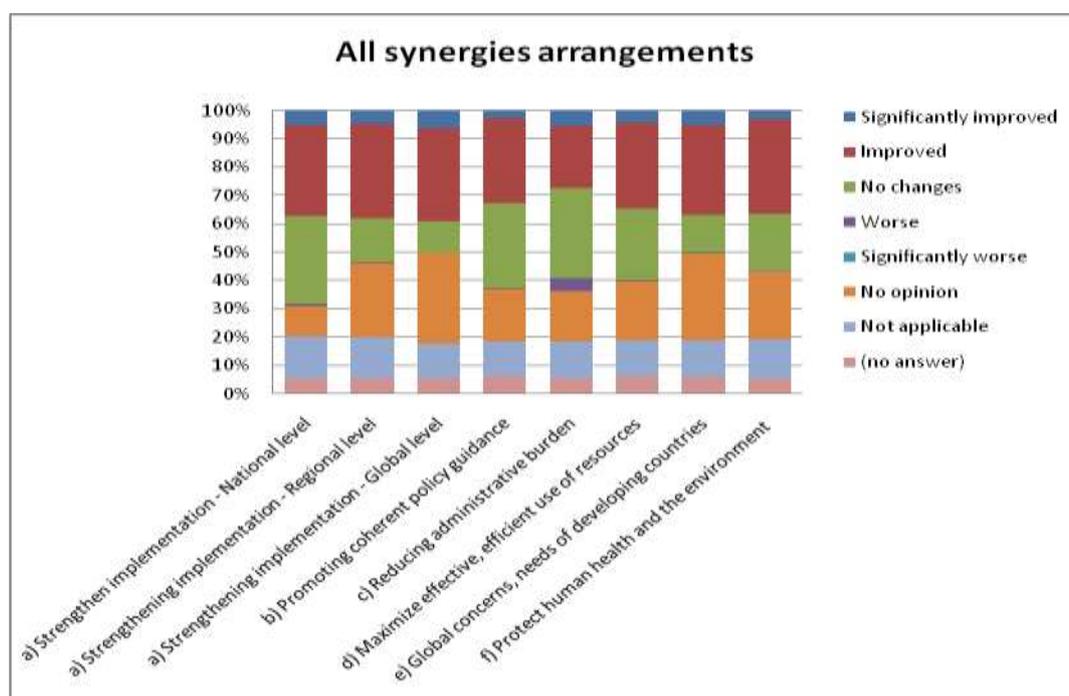


Figure 1

18. Figure 1 shows that half the parties that expressed an opinion consider that the synergies arrangements have, overall, improved the achievement of the synergies objectives. The greatest improvements appear to be in respect of the strengthened implementation of the conventions, while the reduction of the administrative burden appears to be an area where the least improvement is observed. It can also be noted that, overall, over a third of the parties expressed no opinion or considered that no answer was applicable to the question.

<sup>4</sup> <http://synergies.pops.int/Implementation/ReviewofArrangements/tabid/2620/language/en-US/Default.aspx>.

19. Figure 2 shows a comparison of overall satisfaction with the synergies arrangements by joint activities, joint managerial functions and joint services.

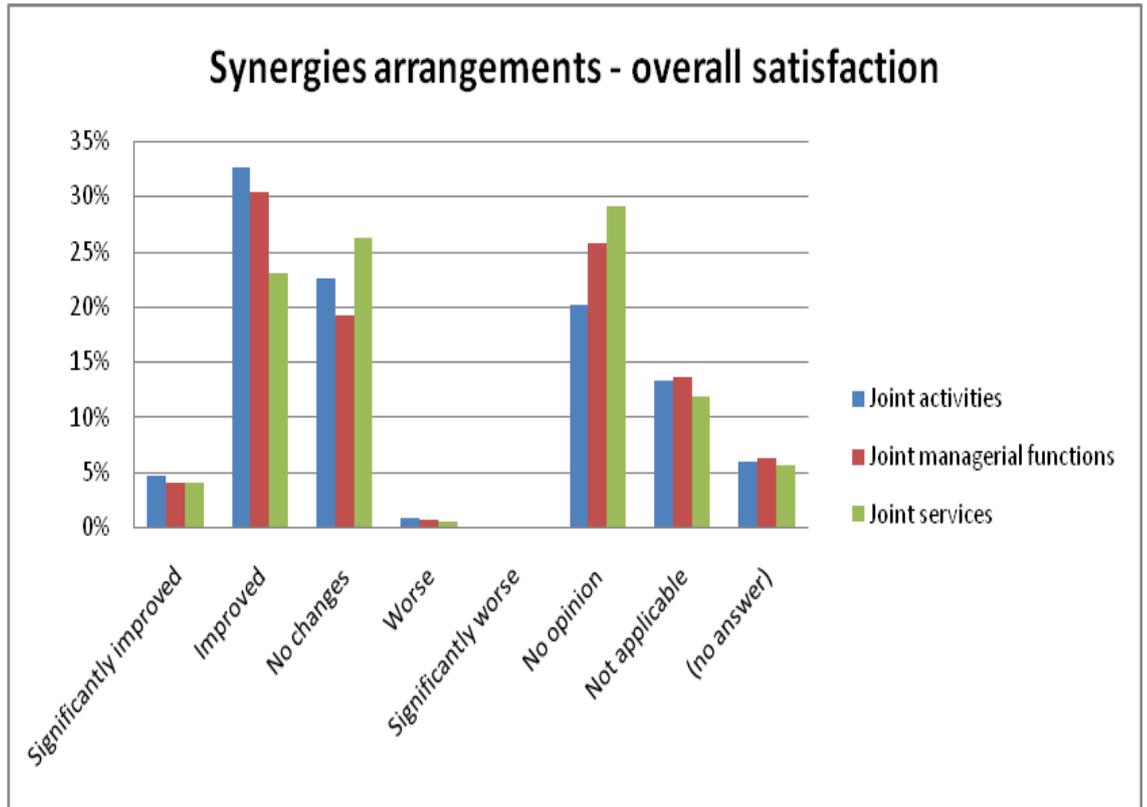


Figure 2

20. The main finding of figure 2 is that parties have mainly expressed positive or neutral opinions regarding the synergy arrangements. It also suggests that joint activities may have contributed the most to achieving the six synergies objectives. Questions related to joint services received the most “no opinion” responses from the parties.

21. Figures 3, 4 and 5 illustrate parties’ overall satisfaction with joint activities, joint managerial functions and joint services, respectively, across each of the objectives.

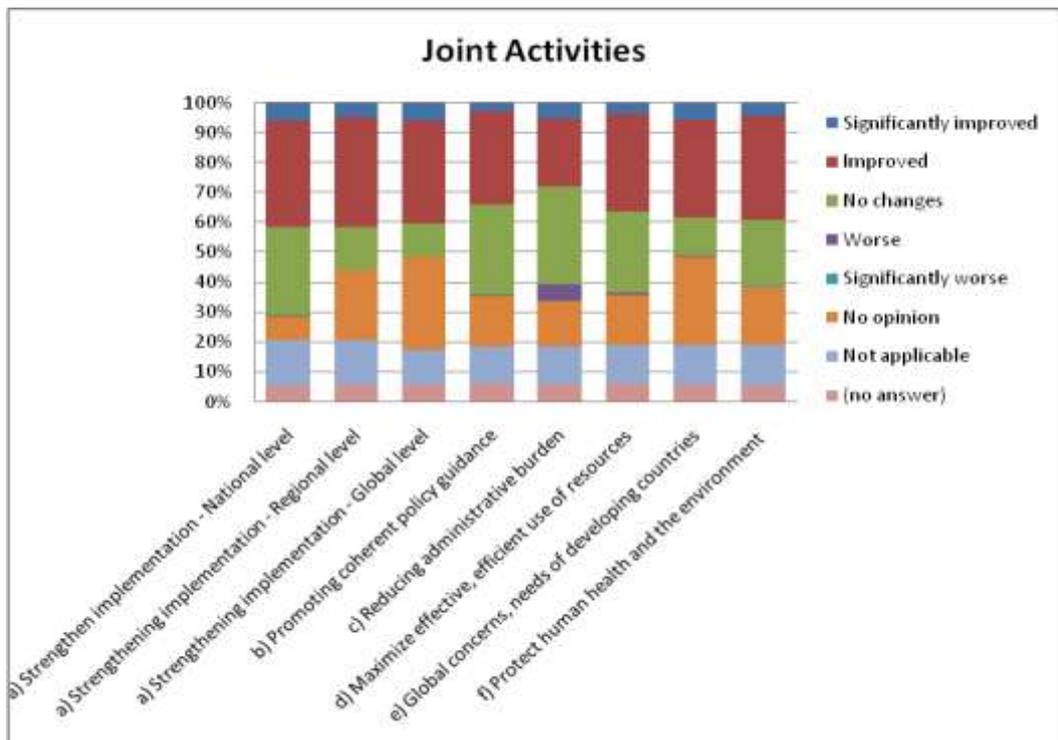


Figure 3

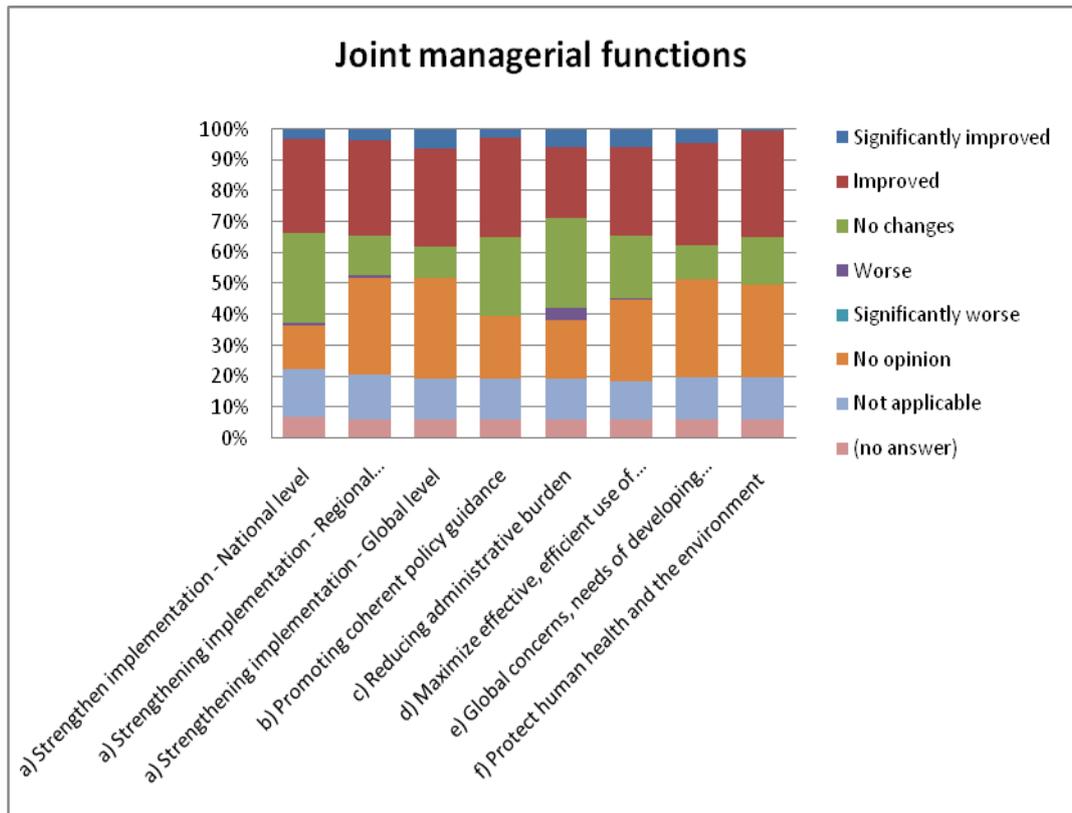


Figure 4

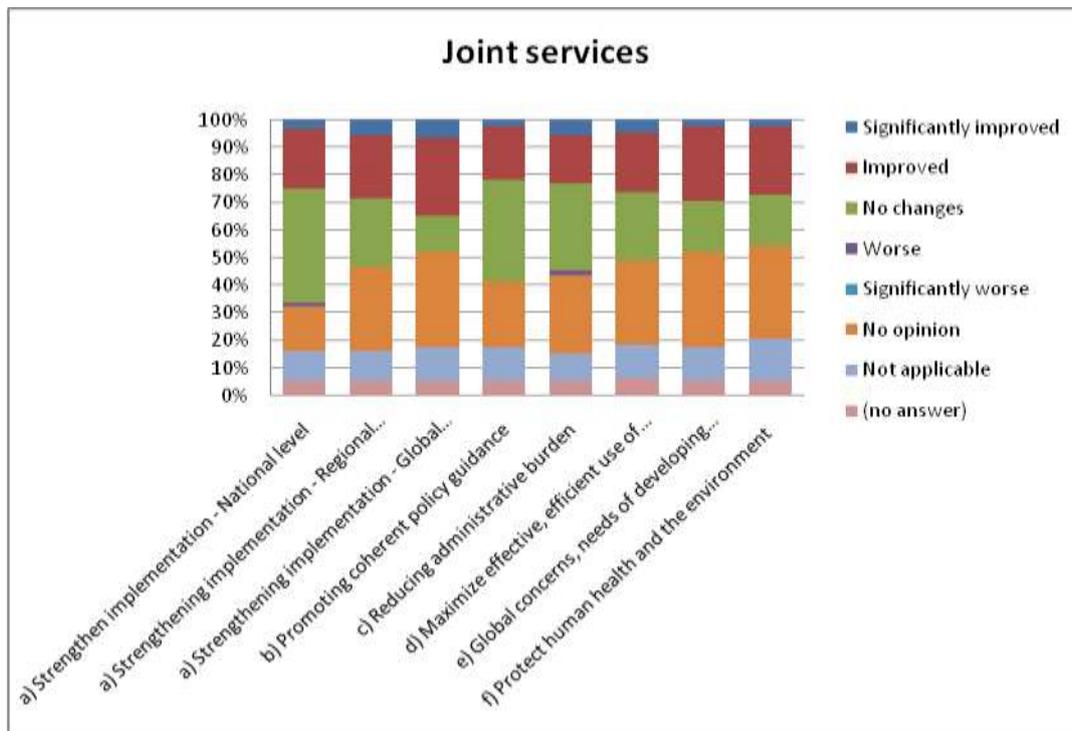


Figure 5

22. These figures suggest that joint activities, followed closely by joint managerial functions, are perceived overall as improving achievement of the synergies objectives. Forty per cent of the responses pertaining to joint activities expressed, for example, a positive perception of the role of synergies in strengthening implementation at the national, regional and global levels. However lower rates of satisfaction were expressed with respect to joint services. The objective of reducing administrative burden also shows a lower rate of satisfaction, which is particularly evident in figure 3 concerning joint activities.

## B. Achievement of the six synergies objectives

### Objective 1: Strengthening the implementation of the three conventions at the national, regional and global levels

23. Figure 6 shows a summary of parties' views on how the synergies arrangements have contributed to the achievement of the first objective – strengthening the implementation of the three conventions at the national, regional and global levels.

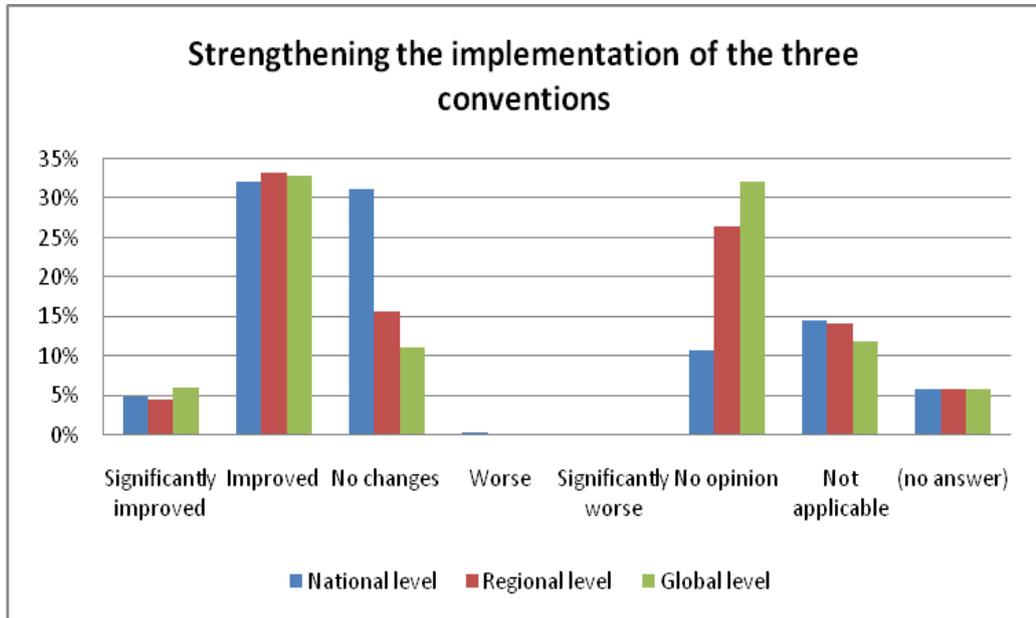


Figure 6

24. The number of responses suggesting improvements in achieving this objective is consistent across the national, regional and global levels. There is, however, a higher number of “no change” responses concerning implementation at the national level. The number of “no opinion” responses is also higher concerning implementation at the global level.

25. Figures 7, 8 and 9 below illustrate parties' overall satisfaction on how far the synergies arrangements have contributed to the objective of strengthening the implementation of the three conventions at each level: national, regional and global.

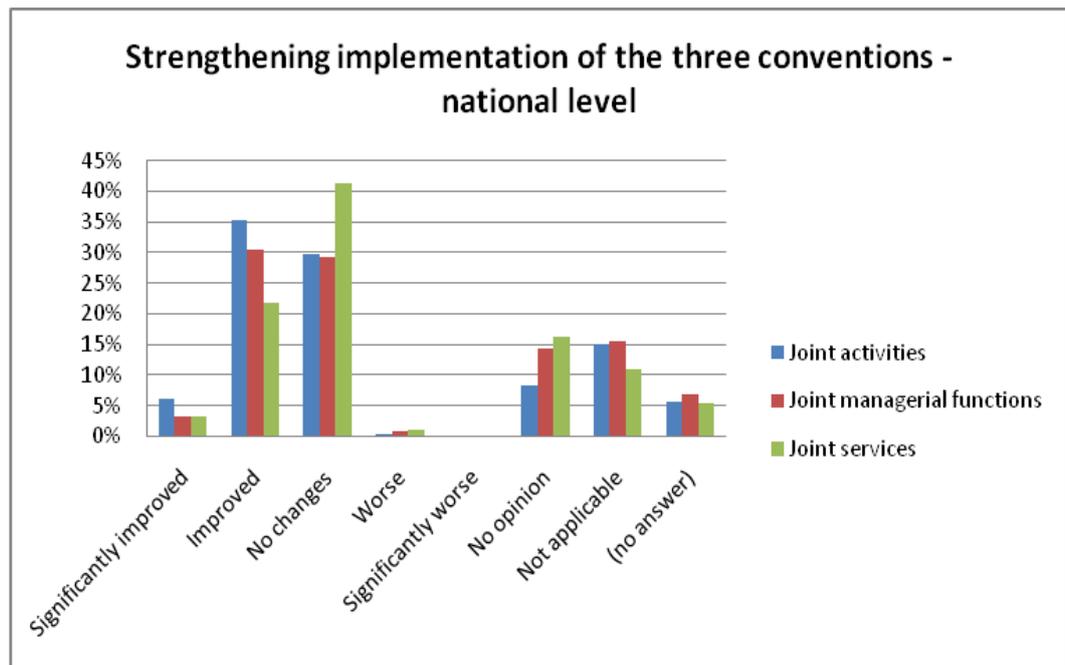


Figure 7

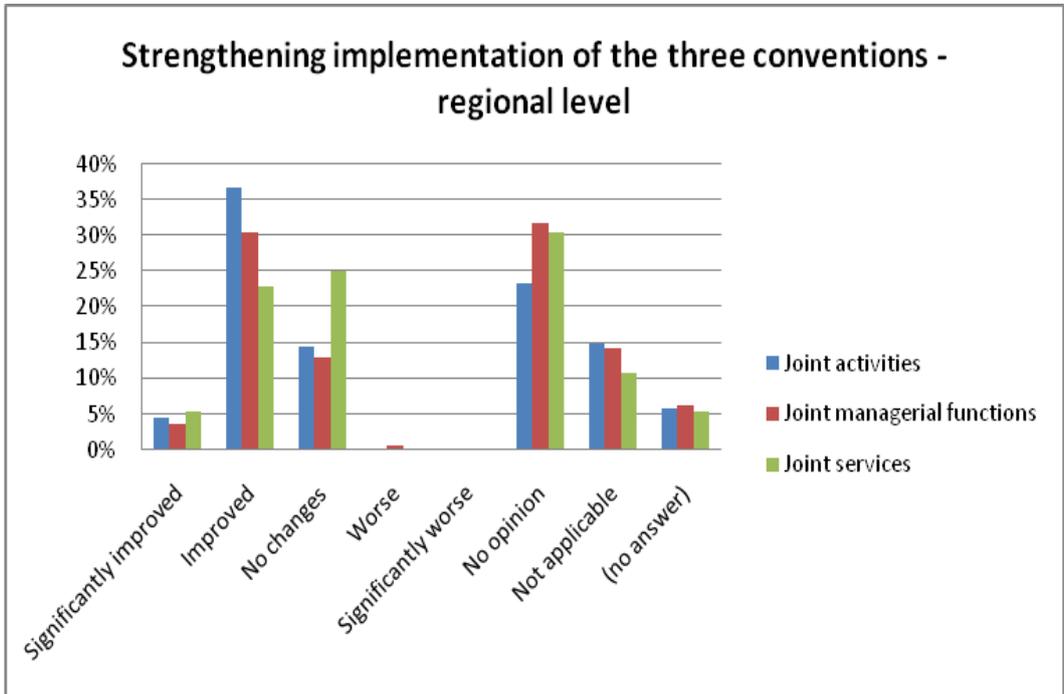


Figure 8

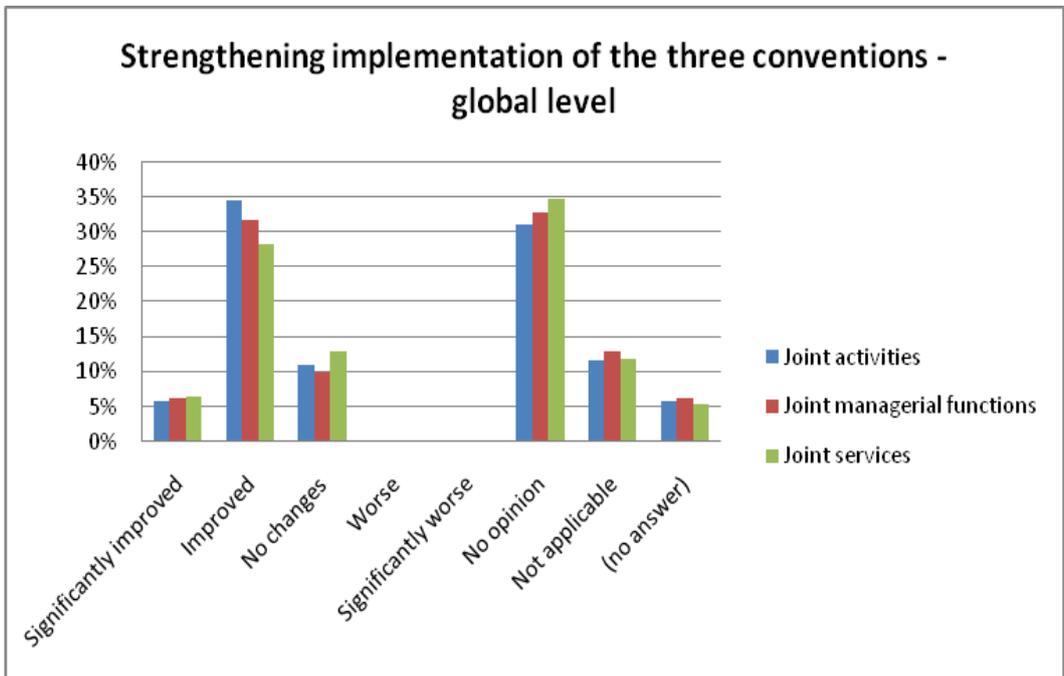


Figure 9

**Objective 2: Promoting coherent policy guidance**

26. Figure 10 illustrates the overall satisfaction of the parties with how the synergies arrangements have contributed to achieving the second objective – promoting coherent policy guidance. While 30 per cent of the respondents report an improvement with regard to joint activities and joint management, a lower level of improvement, 20 per cent, is reported in the case of joint services. There are also comparable levels of responses indicating a lack of impact of synergies on improved coherent policy guidance, in particular with regard to joint services.

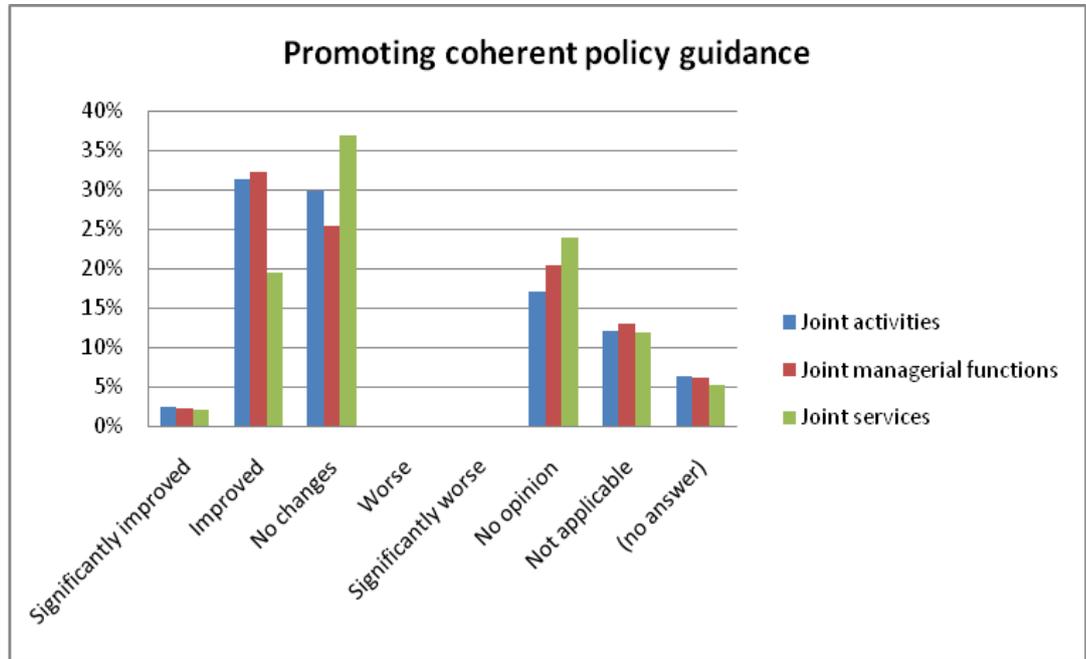


Figure 10

**Objective 3: Reducing administrative burden**

27. Figure 11 illustrates the overall satisfaction of the parties with how far the synergies arrangements have contributed to achieving the third objective – reducing administrative burden. As noted above, questions related to this objective received a comparatively higher number of “worse” responses, in particular with regard to joint activities.

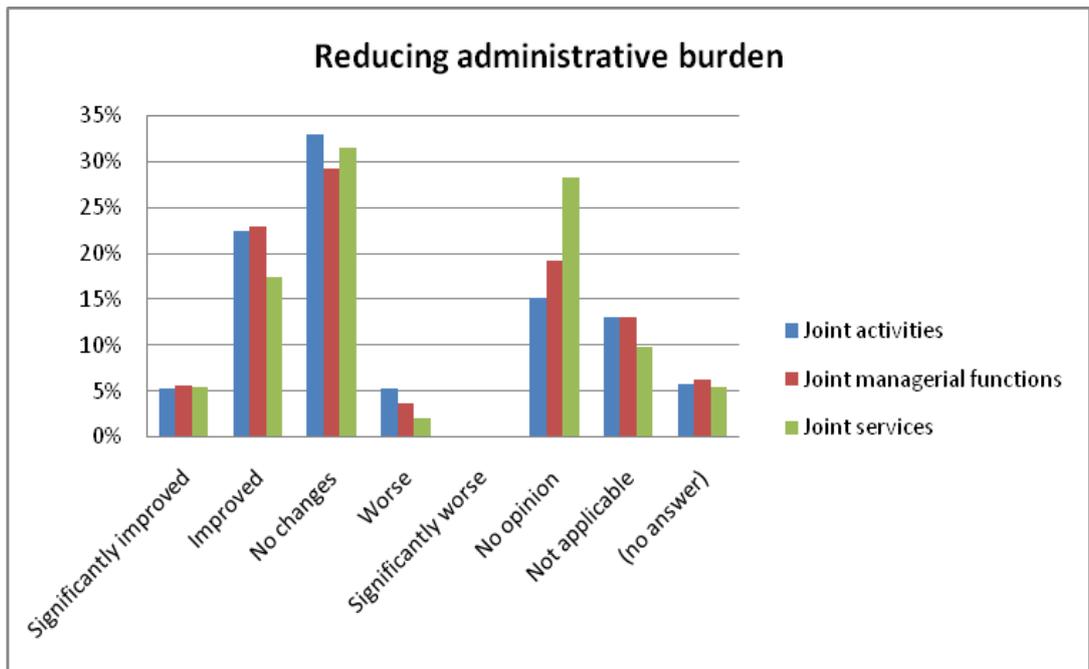


Figure 11

**Objective 4: Maximizing the effective and efficient use of resources at all levels**

28. Figure 12 illustrates the overall satisfaction of the parties with how far the synergies arrangements have contributed to achieving the fourth objective – maximizing the effective and efficient use of resources at all levels.

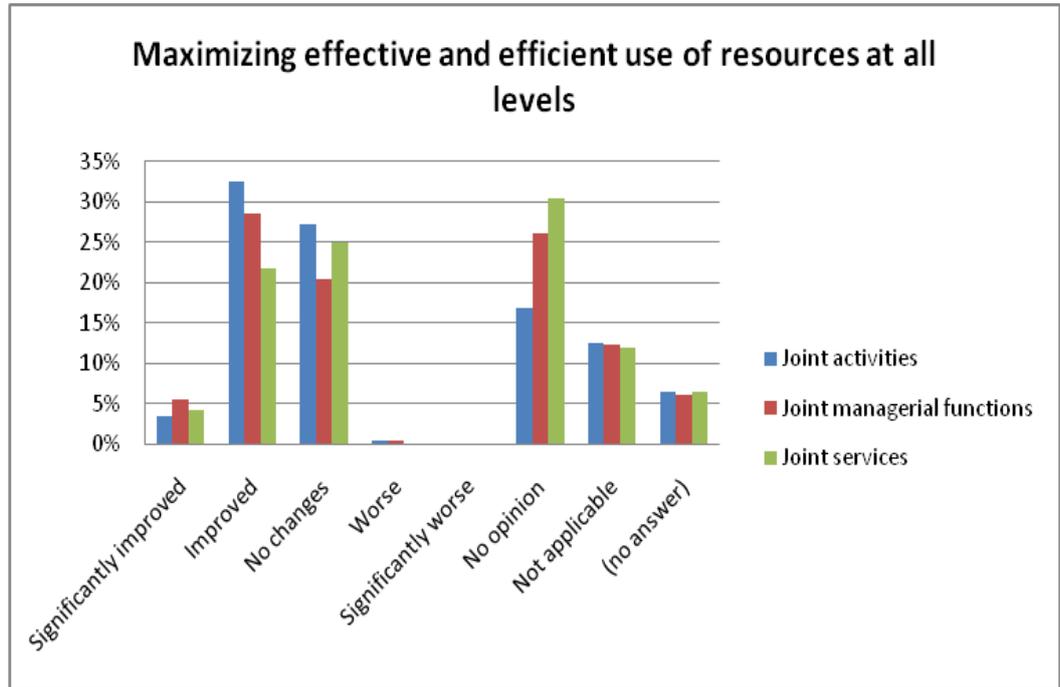


Figure 12

**Objective 5: Taking into account global concerns and the specific needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition**

29. Figure 13 illustrates the overall satisfaction of the parties with how far the synergies arrangements have contributed to achieving the fifth objective – taking into account global concerns and the specific needs of developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

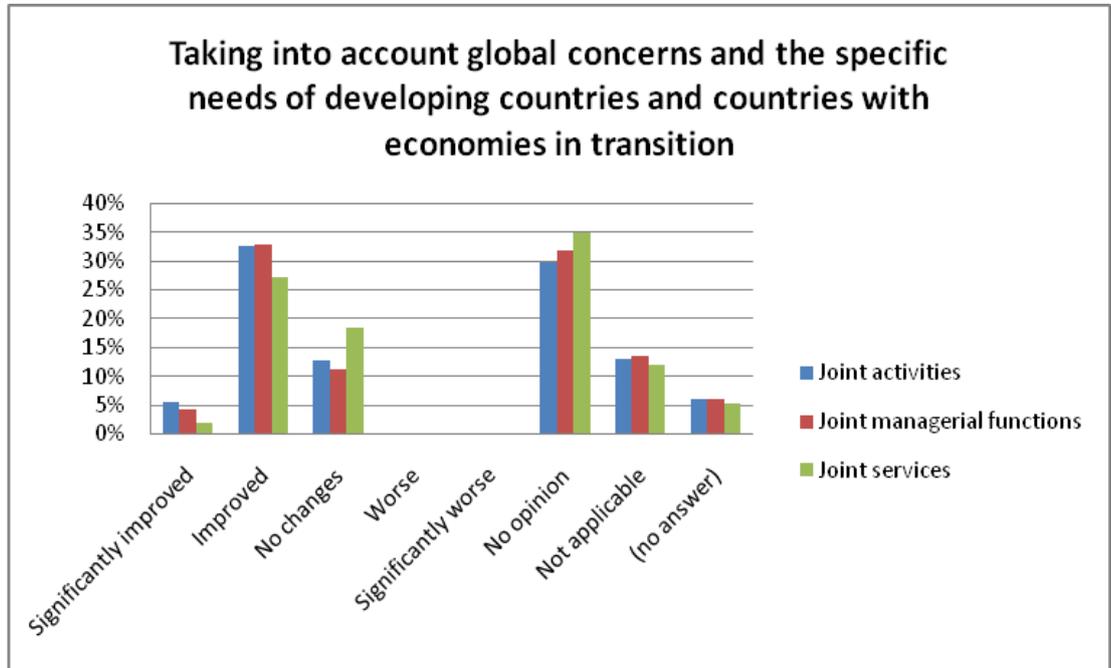


Figure 13

## Objective 6: Protecting human health and the environment for the promotion of sustainable development

30. Figure 14 illustrates the overall satisfaction of the parties with how far the synergies arrangements have contributed to achieving the sixth objective – protecting human health and the environment for the promotion of sustainable development.

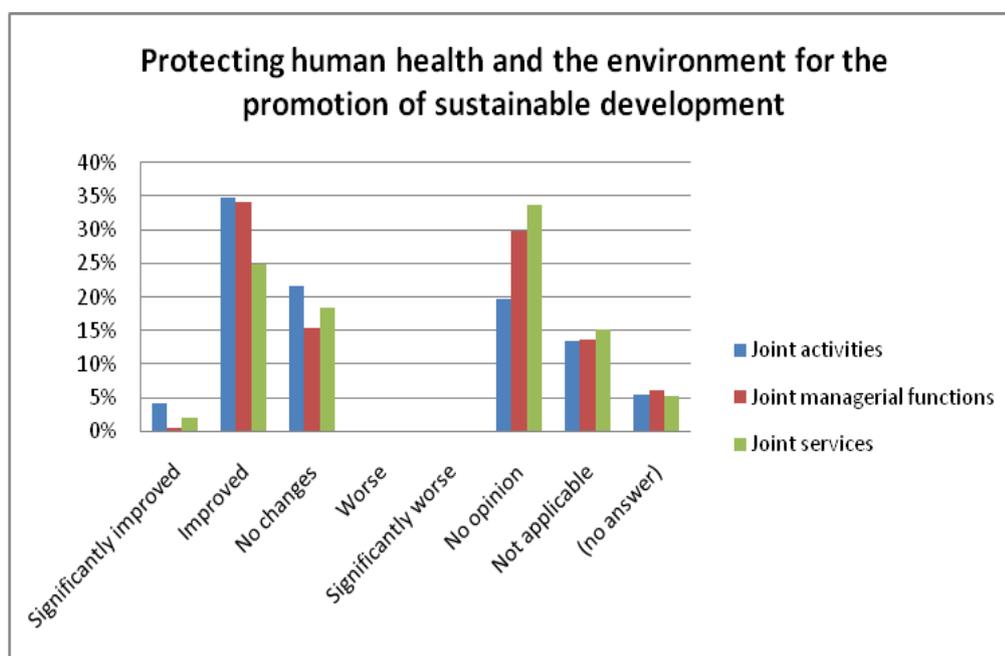


Figure 14

### C. Comments from parties: challenges or obstacles experienced in the achievement of the synergies' objectives and recommendations on steps to make the synergies arrangements better contribute to the six synergies objectives

31. Parties were provided with the opportunity to comment on challenges or obstacles experienced in the achievement of the six synergies objectives through joint activities, joint managerial functions and joint services. Parties also had the opportunity to make recommendations on steps to make the synergies arrangements better contribute to the synergies objectives. The following paragraphs summarize the parties' comments and recommendations.

32. In addition to comments pertaining to the review of the synergies arrangements, two parties expressed some reservations with the questionnaire itself,<sup>5</sup> with one suggesting that, at this early stage of the synergies process, a simpler survey to establish baseline information on synergies might have been more appropriate.<sup>6</sup> Two parties indicated that they viewed the meetings of the conferences of the parties in 2013 as an opportunity to deepen synergies to achieve a more efficient global implementation of the conventions,<sup>7</sup> with one party suggesting a possible further review of the synergies arrangements in 2015.<sup>8</sup>

#### Joint activities

33. Several parties expressed the view that it was premature to assess the effects of joint activities on the achievement of the synergies' objectives.<sup>9</sup> One party indicated that the secretariat's joint activities had contributed to the synergies objectives in the manner and to the extent that could be expected at that point in time and that the synergies arrangements would have a much stronger impact as time progressed.<sup>10</sup> Another party explained that its responses of "no change" or "no opinion" were

<sup>5</sup> Mexico and Canada.

<sup>6</sup> Canada.

<sup>7</sup> France and Switzerland.

<sup>8</sup> Canada.

<sup>9</sup> Canada, France and Switzerland.

<sup>10</sup> Switzerland.

indications that it was too early to evaluate progress and that it was impossible at that point in time to determine whether the synergies arrangements had had an impact on the achievement of the synergies objectives.<sup>11</sup> Another party, however, indicated there were already positive effects to be noted from the synergies arrangements and that it was beneficial to have a more coherent and efficient approach to chemicals and hazardous waste issues at the global, regional and national levels, as well as to increase the visibility of those issues.<sup>12</sup>

34. Comments on specific joint activities were also made with regard to national reporting,<sup>13</sup> criteria for participating in workshops,<sup>14</sup> capacity-building activities relating to the development of legal frameworks, awareness raising and Customs,<sup>15</sup> the constraints faced by small delegations when meetings were held in parallel,<sup>16</sup> guidelines on synergies,<sup>17</sup> and guidance on identification and disposal of polybromodiphenyl ethers and perfluorooctane sulfonic acid, its salts and perfluorooctane sulfonyl fluoride from waste electrical and electronic waste and end of life vehicles.<sup>18</sup>

35. To make the synergies arrangements better contribute to the synergies objectives one party<sup>19</sup> recommended in respect of the secretariat that it should use current joint activities as a basis for exploring further opportunities for coordination and cooperation; that it should involve the Basel Convention regional centres and possibly the regional offices of UNEP in such activities; that it should further explore potential areas of synergies; and that it should present proposals on those matters to the conferences of the parties at their meetings in 2013. The same party recommended that parties should continue to raise awareness of joint activities, since they were meant to meet the objectives of the conventions in an effective and efficient manner, and that they should explore options for synergies with other relevant processes and instruments such as the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management and the Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer.

#### **Joint managerial functions**

36. Three parties made comments on the part of the questionnaire pertaining to joint managerial functions.<sup>20</sup> All three expressed support for the steps taken to date on the restructuring of the Secretariat while respecting the legal autonomy of the three conventions. While one party indicated that it had already noticed significant improvements,<sup>21</sup> all said that more time would be needed to properly assess overall results. One party, however, warned of a possible increase in administrative burden due to additional coordination efforts by the three secretariats.<sup>22</sup>

37. With respect to recommendations on further steps, one party<sup>23</sup> said that it was important to maintain the number of senior management positions at a level that corresponded to the new reorganized structure of the Secretariat and that remained affordable. The party also recommended that the decision to be taken on the continuation of the joint managerial structures take into account on the one hand the limited evidence available and on the other hand the need to be forward-looking with regard to the regime needed to cope with the challenges in the area of chemicals and wastes.

#### **Joint services**

38. Five parties made comments on joint services.<sup>24</sup> One party stated that the process appeared to be moving in the right direction.<sup>25</sup> Another party, however, said that it was difficult to assess the impact of the synergies process properly given the limited time during which the arrangements had been implemented.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Canada.

<sup>12</sup> France.

<sup>13</sup> Canada and Malaysia.

<sup>14</sup> Myanmar.

<sup>15</sup> Madagascar.

<sup>16</sup> Malaysia.

<sup>17</sup> Georgia.

<sup>18</sup> Bulgaria.

<sup>19</sup> Switzerland.

<sup>20</sup> Canada, France and Switzerland.

<sup>21</sup> Switzerland.

<sup>22</sup> France.

<sup>23</sup> Switzerland.

<sup>24</sup> Argentina, Belgium, France, Mexico and Switzerland.

<sup>25</sup> Switzerland.

<sup>26</sup> Canada.

39. Another party welcomed the work done to enhance synergies among the three conventions, in particular the launch of the website dedicated to synergies, the creation of a single secretariat respecting the legal autonomy of the conventions and the organization of the back-to-back 2013 meetings of the conferences of the parties.<sup>27</sup> One party, however, cautioned against the restructuring leading to a possible loss of identity in the relations between the secretariat and parties.<sup>28</sup>

40. With regard to future steps, one party recommended that parties evaluate whether further progress could be achieved by including other entities of the chemicals and wastes regimes.<sup>29</sup> In the same line, another party supported the inclusion in the synergies process of the new mercury instrument, once finalized, and of the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management.<sup>30</sup>

### **III. Views of the Secretariat on the synergies arrangements**

#### **A. On the review**

41. With regard to the efficacy of the review, the limited number of responses did not allow for a thorough analysis or assessment of how parties view the impact of synergies to date. They do, however, give an indication of an emerging trend and provide the starting point for further discussions among parties at the 2013 meetings of the conferences of the parties.

42. Many of the arrangements considered in the review have been in place only for a limited time. It may therefore have been too early to expect much progress in areas such as joint managerial functions or sufficient reporting by the Secretariat in some areas (e.g., administrative burden) that could have aided parties in providing responses.

43. The survey may have been longer than many parties would have preferred, leading to a low response rate.

44. Some aspects of the review have been difficult for parties to deal with. For example, the connection between joint managerial functions and synergies at the national level may have been unclear, making it difficult for parties to express an opinion about how one affected the other.

#### **B. On progress made**

45. The focus of the Secretariat since the 2011 meetings of the conferences of the parties has been on restructuring the Secretariat, implementing the programmes of work of the three conventions, organizing and convening subsidiary body meetings and organizing the 2013 meetings of the conferences of the parties.

46. The restructuring has enabled the Secretariat to build on existing best practices in implementing the programmes of work, organizing subsidiary body meetings and organizing the 2013 meetings of the conferences of the parties, which has strengthened the ability of the Secretariat to support parties.

47. The restructuring has also led to a number of resource efficiencies, which will result in cost savings for parties during the 2012–2013 biennium.

48. For the most part, the synergies efforts to date have focused on synergies at the Secretariat level, the Secretariat's programme of work and the organization of party activities by the Secretariat, e.g., the 2013 meetings of the conferences of the parties. Parties may wish to consider ways to build upon the synergies achieved to date, including through reinforcing what has already been done, and expanding synergies into closely-related areas. For example, regional delivery of assistance to parties could perhaps be strengthened through synergies with organizations, such as intergovernmental organizations, that support parties through technical assistance and capacity-building.

### **IV. Conclusions and recommendations**

49. Despite the relatively low level of responses received from parties to the questionnaire on the review of the synergies arrangements, in general parties that expressed opinions indicated that the synergies arrangements had, overall, improved achievement of the synergies objectives. The greatest improvements appear to be with regard to the strengthened implementation of the conventions, while the reduction of the administrative burden appears to be an area where the least improvement was seen. The relatively frequent answers "no change" or "no opinion" seem to illustrate that the effects of

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<sup>27</sup> Belgium.

<sup>28</sup> Argentina.

<sup>29</sup> Switzerland.

<sup>30</sup> Belgium.

the synergies arrangements have, in several instances, not yet been felt. Several parties commented that the current review of the synergies arrangements might be premature and that a further assessment of the synergies arrangements should be undertaken in the future.

50. On the basis of the responses received to the questionnaire and the secretariat's own views, the following recommendations are offered:

(a) The Secretariat should implement the requests addressed to it in the draft decisions referred to in document UNEP/FAO/CHW/RC/POPS/EXCOPS.2/2;

(b) The parties may wish to consider whether further progress could be achieved through synergies with other parts of the chemicals and wastes regime, for instance the future mercury instrument and the Strategic Approach, and decide on the terms of a next review of the synergies arrangements;

(c) UNEP and FAO may wish to continue their support for the process of enhancing synergies among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions.

## Appendix

### List of synergies arrangements

#### *Joint activities*

1. Development of tools to support countries in implementing the conventions
2. Capacity-building programmes at the regional level
3. Support for sound chemicals and wastes management at the national level
4. Development of partnerships with other multilateral environmental agreements
5. Cooperation and coordination between regional centres and FAO and UNEP regional offices
6. South-South cooperation
7. Synchronization of the submission of national reports
8. Joint capacity-building activities on national reporting
9. Streamlining of national reporting formats
10. Proposal for enhancing coordination among and support for compliance/non-compliance mechanisms once they are established
11. Exchange of information between the secretariats on progress made on the operation and establishment of the compliance/non-compliance mechanisms
12. Support for work and coordination between scientific bodies
13. Support for parties' lifecycle approaches and updating of technical guidelines
14. Information exchange/clearing-house mechanism for information exchange
15. Common approach to awareness-raising: joint outreach and public awareness
16. Publications
17. Joint input into processes: cooperation with institutions and networks
18. Resource mobilization

#### *Joint managerial functions*

19. Establishment of a joint management group
20. Study on the feasibility and cost implications of establishing joint coordination or a joint head of the secretariats
21. Establishment of a joint head
22. Reorganization of the secretariats of the three conventions
23. Coordinated meetings
24. Synchronization of the budget cycles
25. Joint audits

#### *Joint services*

26. Temporary establishment of joint services
  27. Establishment of joint services
  28. Reorganization proposal
  29. Joint information technology services
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