

UPSC Preparation

Rotterdam Convention of 1998 - Important Facts for UPSC Environment & Ecology Notes

Rotterdam Convention is a name for the Convention that was adopted by the Conference of Plenipotentiaries (COP) in 1998 in Rotterdam (Netherlands) that aims to promote shared responsibilities in relation to the international trade of hazardous chemicals. The secretariat of the convention is in Geneva, Switzerland. Read more on Rotterdam Convention for the [IAS Exam](#).

The topic, Rotterdam Convention, is an important segment of the Environment and Ecology syllabus (Mains GS III) of the IAS Exam. Aspirants can prepare similar important environmental conventions by referring to the links below:

- [Basel Convention](#)
- [Bonn Convention](#)
- [Vienna Convention](#)
- [Ramsar Convention](#)
- [Minamata Convention](#)

Objectives of the Rotterdam Convention

1. The parties of the Rotterdam Convention to ensure shared responsibilities and cooperative efforts while trading certain hazardous chemicals internationally.
2. To promote shared responsibility in the international trade of such hazardous chemicals which can harm humans and its environment.
3. To exchange information about the characteristics of the chemicals that the parties to the convention trade so as to contribute to the environmentally sound use of such hazardous chemicals.

The Convention creates legally binding obligations for the implementation of the **Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure**. It built on the voluntary PIC procedure, initiated by UNEP and FAO in 1989 and ceased on 24 February 2006.

What is Prior Informed Consent (PIC) Procedure in the Rotterdam Convention?

It is one of the main provisions of the Rotterdam Convention of 1998 that states that parties that are importing the chemicals as listed in Annex III of the Convention have to formally obtain and disseminate the decision of receiving future shipments of such chemicals. The importing parties have to ensure that decisions related to their import are well in compliance by the exporting parties.

There are 52 chemicals listed in Annex III of the Rotterdam Convention for the trade of which parties have to follow the mechanism of Prior Informed Consent Procedure.

Provisions of Rotterdam Convention

The following are the provisions covered under the Rotterdam Convention:

1. The convention covers those pesticides and industrial chemicals that are banned or severely restricted.
2. Any concern related to pesticides and industrial chemicals promotes their inclusion on Annex III of the convention.
3. Annex III other than comprising chemicals that need PIC, also may contain those chemicals and pesticides that present a risk under conditions of use in developing countries or countries with economies in transition.
4. A decision guidance document (DGC) contains all the information regarding the chemicals mentioned under Annex III.
5. With respect to the chemicals under Annex III, the member parties have the following choices:
 - To allow its import
 - To disallow its import
 - To allow its import with some conditions
6. A country that imports chemicals has to formulate decisions that are trade-neutral.

Two Important Mechanisms of the Rotterdam Convention

There are two important mechanisms under the Rotterdam Convention:

1. **PIC Procedure** (Explained above)
2. **Information Exchange** – It is a mechanism under which parties have to inform the Secretariat when they take a domestic regulatory action to ban or severely restrict a chemical. Any party that is exporting a chemical which is banned in its territory has to comply with the guideline to inform all the importing parties before its first shipment.

Two industrial chemicals that are being discussed recently to be included in the PIC procedure (Annex III) are:

1. Decabromodiphenyl ether (decaBDE)
2. Perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA)

Two new chemicals that were added in the list of mandatory PIC procedure in COP9 of Rotterdam Convention:

1. Phorate
2. HBCD

Rotterdam Convention – Conference of Parties (RC – COP)

- **RC COP 9** – It was the ninth meeting of the conference of parties to the Rotterdam Convention that met in April-May 2019 in Geneva, Switzerland.
- **RC COP 10** – It will be the 10th meeting of COP that is scheduled to meet in July 2021 in Geneva. The RC COP 10 will take place along with the [Stockholm Convention](#) (COP 10) and Basel Convention (COP 15). The three conventions together are termed as BRS Convention as they share the same secretariat but enjoy the legal independence of their work. **The theme of the Rotterdam convention COP 10 is “Global Agreements for a Healthy Planet: Sound management of chemicals and waste”.**

Members of Rotterdam Convention

There are 163 parties of the Rotterdam Convention and 72 signatories.

Is India a member of the Rotterdam Convention?

Yes, India is a member of the Rotterdam Convention:

- India's acceded to Rotterdam Convention on 24th May 2005
- Rotterdam Convention came into force in India – 22nd August 2005

What is Chrysotile Asbestos and what is India's stand?

Asbestos is a group of six naturally occurring minerals composed of soft, flexible fibres that are heat-resistant and is highly toxic. It is termed as carcinogenic as it causes mesothelioma.

Chrysotile Asbestos is a well-debated mineral that is speculated to be added in Annex III of the Rotterdam convention. However, the parties have not unanimously agreed to the addition of Asbestos until now.

India's stand:

1. India has opposed the listing of Asbestos under Rotterdam Convention's PIC procedure. India though has banned asbestos mining in India.
2. India's Fiber Cement Product Manufacturer's Association in the COP 9 to the Rotterdam Convention opposed the listing of Asbestos in Annex III, saying there were no Indian studies showing negative health impacts from chrysotile exposures.
3. The use of Asbestos is prevalent in India, though the Ministry of Environment has stated, "Alternatives to asbestos may be used to the extent possible and use of asbestos may be phased out."
4. The Ban Asbestos Network of India (BANI) has been working towards an asbestos-free India to safeguard the health of the present and future generations.

Aspirants should by-now know about the important points of Rotterdam Convention which can be asked in [UPSC Prelims 2020](#).

As Environment and Ecology are important sections of the IAS Exam, aspirants can refer to the below-mentioned links to aid their preparation:

Related Links:

[Environment Questions for UPSC Mains GS 3](#)

[Environment And Ecology Notes For UPSC – Environment Notes For IAS Preparation](#)

[GS 3 Structure, Strategy and Syllabus](#)

[How to Prepare Environment and Ecology for UPSC?](#)

[Topic-Wise GS 3 Questions for UPSC Mains](#)

[UPSC Syllabus](#)