

Workshop Report

Advancing effective Multilateral Environmental Agreements implementation in Central Asia: Promoting synergies and rights-based approaches to combat pollution

Almaty, Kazakhstan

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1. Background and introduction

In the pollution agenda, advancing synergies and cooperation across multilateral environmental agreements (MEAs) has gathered increasing recognition as a cornerstone of environmental governance,¹ which can guide countries towards: 1) strengthening domestic coordination and cooperation for planning and implementation in synergy; 2) enhancing the necessary enabling conditions (policies, laws and institutional arrangements) for their effective implementation; and 3) promoting policy coherence at all levels.

Several decisions from MEA governing bodies and/or existing cooperation mechanisms and working groups under the purview of relevant international Conventions and Protocols recognize the importance of synergies and coordination. Two notable examples include: 1) the [cooperation between the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm \(BRS\) Conventions and the Minamata Convention](#);² and 2) the [cooperation between the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers \(Protocol on PRTRs\) to](#)

¹ As evidenced by various exploratory studies, decisions from governing bodies of MEAs as well as recommendations from other international events, such as the [Bern III Conference](#) held in January 2024.

² Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal; Rotterdam Convention on the prior informed consent procedure for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade; Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs); Minamata Convention on Mercury.

[the UNECE Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters \(Aarhus Convention\)](#) and the [Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution \(Air Convention\)](#), [BRS](#) and [Minamata Conventions](#).³ Furthermore, the adoption of the [Global Framework on Chemicals](#) (GFC) in 2023 has created significant momentum to promote synergies and cooperation across the cluster of pollution-related MEAs. The Framework presents a comprehensive plan to guide countries and stakeholders in jointly addressing the lifecycle of chemicals and reducing emissions and releases of chemicals and waste to the environment, which *inter alia* are a [significant source of air pollution](#) and an obstacle to the realization of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment recognized by [UNGA resolution 76/300](#).

UNEP, in cooperation with MEA Secretariats, UNECE and other partner organizations, provides [substantive support to countries](#) with the development and implementation of effective national policies, legislation and governance frameworks to strengthen coordination and cooperation in the domestic implementation of MEAs. Since 1982, UNEP's environmental law activities have been organized and coordinated through its flagship [Programme for the Development and Periodic Review of Environmental Law \(Montevideo Programme\)](#).

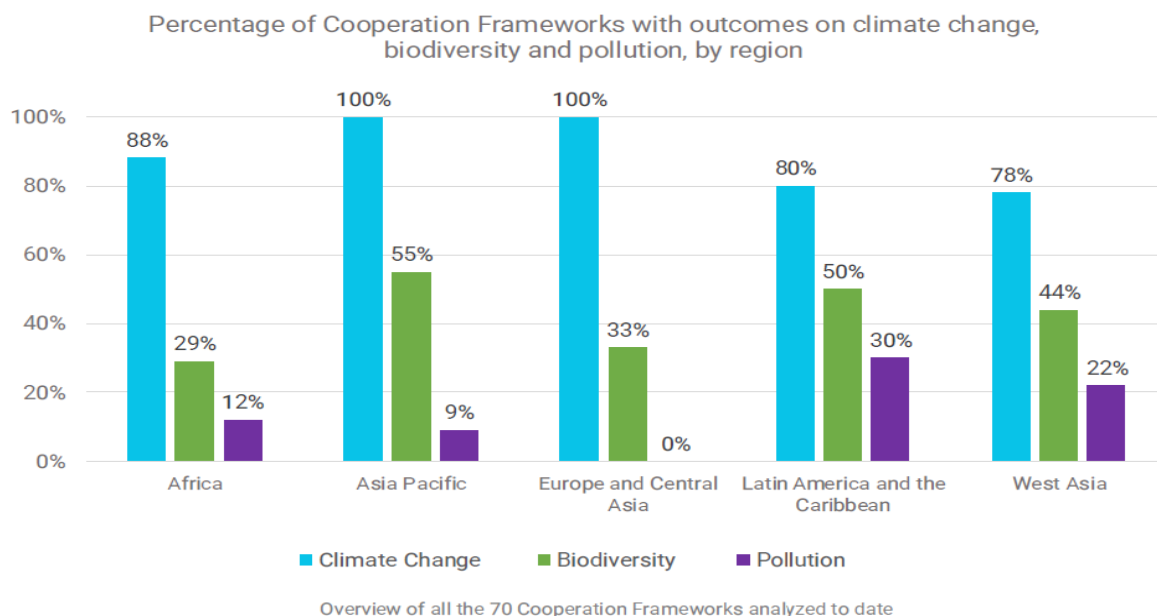
UNEP's Montevideo Programme can build country capacities to advance the synergetic implementation of MEAs at national level, enhancing cooperation between the national focal points of the relevant instruments, as well as promoting their cooperation with national Montevideo Focal Points. This can help countries achieve a more integrated, effective and inclusive national environmental governance system - one paved with synergies and benefits, which strives to balance domestic policy objectives with effective laws and regulations to advance coherent MEA implementation.

1.1 Catalysing MEAs implementation support from the UN Development System

Resident Coordinators and United Nations Country Teams (UNCTs) play a key role in mainstreaming MEAs in UN Country programming processes (Country Analyses / CAs and UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks / UNSDCFs). UNCTs can leverage the synergies and comparative advantages of MEAs to: embed MEA implementation across national sustainable development planning and policy processes, linking these with relevant policy tools and strategies; break siloes across government departments working on different MEAs and sustainable development issues; and encourage regional peer learning opportunities to encourage countries to learn from one another to advance on their national priorities, especially in geographical contexts with similar needs.

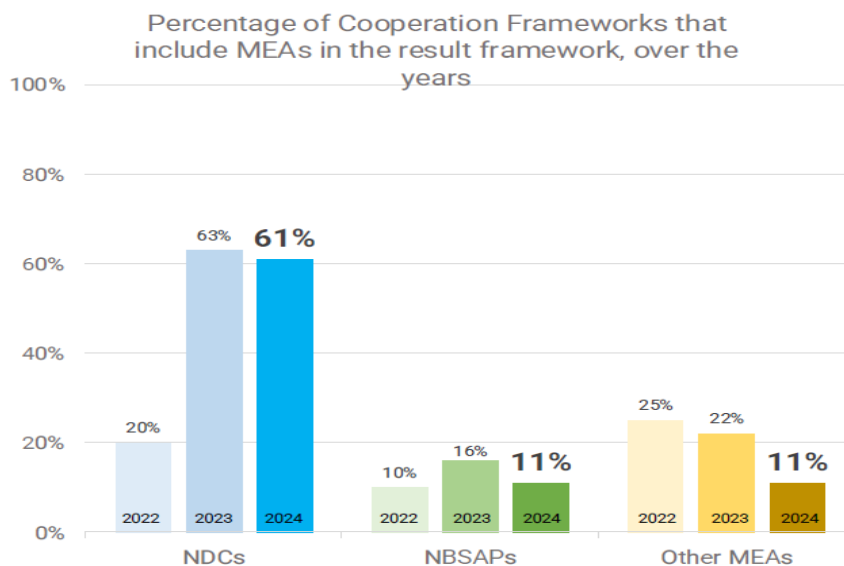
A recent analysis by UNEP on the integration of pollution in UNSDCFs in the Europe and Central Asia Region has revealed that, compared to climate change and biodiversity loss, from the 70 UNSDCFs analysed by UNEP between 2022-2024 to date, none include specific outcomes on pollution (see figure below).

³ As an example, see the Global Round Table on PRTs organised under the auspices of UNECE and OECD, in cooperation with UNITAR and UNEP: <https://unece.org/environment-policy/public-participation/global-round-table-prts>.



Source: UNEP review of Cooperation Frameworks (CFs) developed between 2022-2024

A similar conclusion also applies to the inclusion of pollution-related MEAs commitments and actions in UNSDCFs results frameworks. Compared with Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) (61%), only 11% of the UNSDCFs developed in 2024 include reference to other MEAs strategies and action plans (11%) (see figure below).



Source: UNEP review of Cooperation Frameworks (CFs) developed between 2022-2024

The [UN Common Approach towards a Pollution-free Planet](#) (UN Common Approach to Pollution) can help address these gaps, representing a “One-UN” voice that can promote the strategic and coherent

inclusion of pollution issues across the work of RCs and UNCTs and influence horizontal policy processes as well as vertical integration at country level.

1.2 The need for a sub-regional capacity-building workshop in Central Asia

Recent UNEP analyses combined with the findings of relevant UNECE [Environmental Performance Reviews](#) suggest that countries in the Central Asia region face significant environmental challenges related to chemicals, waste management and air pollution, many of which have transboundary implications. Strengthening synergies in the national and regional implementation of international agreements such as the BRS and Minamata Conventions, the UNECE Air Convention, Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs can therefore help Central Asian countries address pollution sources collectively, improve monitoring, digital reporting and data information systems, and implement coherent policies and legislation that advance effective environmental governance by implementing the MEAs in synergy. A coordinated approach will not only protect human health and the environment but also serve as a cost-effective means for governments to support sustainable economic growth, circular economy and regional stability.

In addition, although all five countries in the region have explicitly entrenched the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment or variations thereof in their constitutional frameworks or legislation, there are still several implementation challenges due to persisting normative, capacity and awareness gaps. These include the need to improve coordination and synergies across national policies, laws and institutional frameworks, compounded by capacity gaps of legislators and the judiciary to effectively secure and enforce their implementation. In this context, promoting the effective implementation of the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs across the region remains an important mechanism to close the information, normative and capacity gaps and strive for the full implementation of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

In response to the above needs, UNEP and UNECE facilitated a capacity building workshop. The aim of the workshop was to support the five countries of Central Asia to strengthen whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches for the coherent and effective implementation of selected MEAs (BRS Conventions, Minamata Convention, UNECE Air Convention, Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs) at the national level, including through improved cooperation and coordination among the focal points and other government experts working across the selected MEAs.

The workshop's main focus was on synergetic entry points for national and regional implementation, including in the context of the GFC. This was complemented by dedicated discussions on how the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, and particularly its procedural elements of the right to access to information, participation in decision-making and access to justice under the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs can serve as key enabling conditions for the effective implementation of pollution-related MEAs, in line with the respective mandates under such MEAs.

The workshop brought together MEA, Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MFA) and other national focal points, UNCT Focal Points, National Focal Points of the Montevideo Programme, representatives of

civil society and partner organizations (OSCE) from Kazakhstan, Kyrgyz Republic, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan and Uzbekistan with the following objectives and themes:

1. **Strengthen the skills and capacities of the country representatives to advance synergies in national MEAs implementation**, integrating mutually supportive obligations and provisions across national sustainable development and pollution strategies and facilitating the effective preparation of national implementation plans.
2. **Strengthen national coordination and cooperation across government departments to foster interministerial and multi-stakeholder engagement through increased policy coherence**. Stronger coordination and collaboration across the respective national focal points can lead to awareness and practical understanding of how the synergies and interlinkages between the chemicals, waste, air pollution and human rights clusters can be promoted and effectively implemented at the national level. This is necessary to advance a “whole of government” and “whole of society” approach towards the implementation of the MEAs and the GFC.
3. **Increase understanding of how the development, implementation and enforcement of national legal frameworks can drive the effective implementation of MEAs and the GFC, enabled by access to information, participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters**. Greater cooperation and collaboration between MEA, MFA and National Montevideo Focal Points is an essential precondition for this, which can lead to greater anchoring of environmental rights in national policies and legislation.
4. **Promote regional peer learning across the five countries of Central Asia and greater cooperation between MEA Focal Points and UN Country Teams towards MEAs implementation**. Under the UN Common Approach to Pollution, UNCTs can drive greater mainstreaming and uptake of MEAs across the work of the United Nations in Central Asia.

A pre-workshop survey was circulated amongst participants, alongside relevant background documents. All background documents are available at the following website: <https://www.unep.org/events/workshop/advancing-effective-mea-implementation-central-asia-promoting-synergies-and-rights>

Relevant learning and capacity building sources are reported in Annex I of the present report.

The pre-workshop survey results are reported in Annex II of the present report.

2. Summary of key discussion points and main findings

2.1 On whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches for coherent and integrated pollution management

Participants highlighted their experience with advancing coherent national governance conditions for integrated pollution management, focusing on whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches. The discussion was informed by a presentation of the [policy coherence methodology by UNEP in support of SDG Indicator 17.14.1](#). The main discussion points and findings include:

- a) **Interagency and interministerial coordination remains an important pre-condition for effective MEAs implementation, as recognized by relevant guidance or recommendations provided under respective MEAs. As the countries of Central Asia experience various degrees of institutional challenges in this regard, the establishment of national MEA coordinating committees, units or equivalent bodies could be a useful means to encourage cooperation and synergies in MEAs implementation, including to tackle pollution. National Montevideo Focal Points are encouraged to actively engage in the workings of any MEA coordinating bodies. Moreover, such institutions should maintain regular dialogue and engagement with civil society.** Some Central Asia countries already account for similar coordination mechanisms in their institutional settings, but capacity and funding challenges prevent their effective operationalization. These coordinating institutions, if properly equipped and capacitated, could bring MEAs implementation to the attention of the highest level of government. They could influence the prioritization process of national development strategies and related budget financing; identify substantive priorities for implementation and bring pollution issues to the attention of diverse decision-makers, thus mobilizing a whole-of-government approach. Moreover, they could foster greater policy coherence and, by maintaining regular dialogue with civil society, ensure that rights-based approaches are respected and upheld across national policymaking cycles for chemicals and pollution management. Greater engagement of National Montevideo Focal Points in national MEA coordination matters could positively influence the development process of National Action Plans (NAPs) and National Implementation Plans (NIPs) on chemicals and waste management and pollution prevention strategies and plans, as well as the periodic implementation reports submitted by the countries to the MEA Secretariats. It could also enhance the workings of any national MEA coordinating bodies by promoting the greater inclusion of environmental rule of law aspects into policy processes and the resulting strategic documents and reports.
- b) **Digitalization and digital transformations are critical enablers of a whole-of-government approach in environmental governance. As such, they deserve proper attention and investment from national decision-makers of Central Asia. PRTR systems, required by the Protocol on PRTRs, offer a solution in this space.** Digitalizing information can help overcome institutional fragmentation, improve data collection, and facilitate transparent and fact-based decision-making. Some countries in Central Asia have already begun digitalizing correspondence and communication across institutions to facilitate information sharing, including for reporting purposes under the MEAs. Nevertheless, the effectiveness of environmental data management

systems continues to be hindered by capacity, financial and institutional gaps, for instance: gaps in waste statistics, emissions data, and environmental performance monitoring of products and activities, including through remote sensing verification methods. Investing in greater data interoperability across the various national platforms, moreover, could spur greater interinstitutional coordination, data exchanges and collaboration. This could not only ensure more seamless access to information and consistent public engagement in decision making, but also inform a more systematic and digitally enabled preparation of state of environment reports.

Rooted in national policy and legal frameworks, and making active use of relevant tools and guidance provided under other MEAs and by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD),⁴ PRTR systems can offer government stakeholders a coordinated reporting system on pollutants that can advance the synergetic implementation of the BRS, Minamata, UNECE Air and Aarhus Conventions, as well as the GFC. **In this regard, all countries in Central Asia are encouraged to accede to the Protocol on PRTRs.** Some of the benefits of investing in a PRTR system include:

- Creating a legal framework for information sharing and communication across national stakeholders.
- Reduction in duplication and facilitation of MEAs reporting.
- Enhanced effectiveness in the evaluation of data quality, leading to its improvement.
- Improved long-term environmental performance and policies.
- Provision of immediate, fact-based support for decision-makers, enabled by user-friendly data visualization that sets emissions in spatial and other context (e.g. health, infrastructure, demographic and economic data).
- Greater access to funding and capacity building opportunities from international donors and funds, including the [Global Framework on Chemicals Fund](#) and funding from the Global Environment Facility (GEF).

- c) **Digitalization and digital transformations are equally critical enablers of a whole-of-society approach and essential means to advance environmental rights in Central Asia. The Aarhus Centers can promote action in this space, supporting the integration of civil society voices into e-governance systems and related national platforms in line with the Aarhus Convention.** Many countries in Central Asia have invested in the development of national digital platforms offering digitally enabled public services, including on environmental information and management, as well as public participation in related decision-making. In many instances, however, public awareness and capacity to use these platforms remains low. In order to ensure widespread public access and increased use of the digital platforms for disclosing information about the state of the environment and pollution sources, it is recommended to increase the frequency and scope of dedicated awareness raising campaigns, including through social media and the engagement of youth groups, and establish user feedback mechanisms. In this regard, the Aarhus Centers can play an important advocacy and capacity building role by promoting obligations of relevant MEAs to governments and different stakeholders. Acting as trusted intermediaries between communities and authorities, Aarhus Centers can engage and build awareness and the capacity

⁴ See <https://www.oecd.org/en/topics/monitoring-and-preventing-industrial-pollution.html>.

of civil society to better use digital tools to access and submit environmental data, as well as demand greater access to environmental information and participation in decision-making. By fostering transparency and accountability, Aarhus Centers play a unique role in Central Asia to foster a more participatory, informed, and responsive approach to environmental governance in the digital age.

- d) **Human capacity and expertise gaps of relevant institutions (national and local), compounded by resource and funding constraints, hinder the full and effective implementation of MEAs in Central Asia. Greater national investment in the education/policy nexus can help close capacity and expertise gaps related to pollution. Moreover, regional pooling of resources and expertise, including through regional MEAs centers, as well as learning and knowledge building opportunities offered by MEA Secretariats, can further support this situation.** High turnover in government positions erodes institutional memory and disrupts long-term MEAs implementation. This is aggravated by the limited presence of trained national experts on pollution, chemicals and waste, air quality issues and related law and governance, compared to the scale of pollution issues in Central Asia. Pollution, especially in the context of chemicals management, is not yet considered an issue widely known and appreciated by decision-makers when compared, for instance, with climate change. Furthermore, limited inclusion of pollution issues across national budget processes, lack of comprehensive financial resources to address them nationally and locally, and dependence on external donor funding reinforce delays in ratification or accession with certain MEAs (for instance, the Minamata Convention and the Protocol on PRTRs). In some cases, additional reporting obligations and possible economic repercussions and impacts on certain areas of industrial development are brought forward to explain such delay. Nevertheless, the countries that have ratified such MEAs report on the positive developments stemming from their implementation.

Education plays a key role in building and sustaining national expertise and capacities of decision-makers over time, as well as engaging the public by raising awareness of pollution issues and fostering a sense of shared responsibility. Establishing national university networks and rolling out dedicated curricula on chemicals and waste management and environmental law in higher education are an important precondition for the sustainability of national expertise and capacities of future decision-makers to work on pollution prevention and management across Central Asia. More awareness raising campaigns around pollution issues, with the involvement of civil society and facilitated by relevant institutions, such as Aarhus Centers and Basel and Stockholm Conventions regional centers, can shine a light on the importance of MEAs implementation across all levels of government and society, provided these are communicated to the public in a way that is easy to understand and resonates.

Continued investment in training, re-training, capacity building and awareness-raising remains a crucial condition to sustain momentum towards effective MEAs implementation in Central Asia, especially for technical government staff and decision-makers at national and local levels. Regional and Coordinating Centres for Capacity Building and Technology Transfer under the Basel and Stockholm Conventions, as well as Aarhus Centers, can play a key role in pooling resources, expertise and attracting external funding to help provide targeted support to the countries in

Central Asia, compensating national gaps. Furthermore, several MEA Secretariats provide training courses, knowledge products and knowledge building opportunities that are continuously available to national decision makers and can thus help overcome loss of institutional memory for MEAs implementation. **Relevant learning and capacity building sources are reported in Annex I of the present report.**

- e) **Striving for policy coherence can aid decision-makers in Central Asia achieve more integrated, effective and inclusive national pollution governance systems. SDG Indicator 17.14.1 and the [questionnaire on the mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence of sustainable development developed by UNEP and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development \(OECD\)](#) can help operationalize whole-of-government and society approaches in environmental decision-making.** The UNEP-OECD questionnaire is a practical tool that can help national decision-makers in Central Asia advance policy coherence across pollution governance and improve national conditions for MEAs implementation. It can be used as a 'checklist' that can guide decision-makers towards the following outcomes: uplifting pollution issues to the attention of the highest level of government and creating relevant performance measure indicators; balancing domestic policy objectives with sustainable development and MEAs obligations; identifying 'levers' to better integrate different pollution policies and decisions with one another, as well as mainstream pollution-related issues in other policy areas and sectors; promoting greater institutional coordination and societal participation in decision-making; and ultimately advance synergies in MEAs implementation. Policymakers from Central Asia are encouraged to use the UNEP-OECD questionnaire on the mechanisms in place to enhance policy coherence of sustainable development to guide the thought process behind their sectoral decisions across the policy cycle as a way to bring further coherence across their national normative cadres and institutional landscapes.

- f) **Advancing the implementation of national projects in the field of chemicals and waste in synergy can help maintain the momentum with MEAs implementation across Central Asia. However, this requires increasing awareness about funding instruments for MEAs implementation, such as the [UNEP Special Programme](#), Global Framework on Chemicals Fund and the GEF, and improving national conditions and capacities to access them.** National MEA Focal points may experience institutional and capacity challenges working directly with national GEF focal points for the preparation of project proposals that can meet international standards and unlock funding opportunities for their countries. In this regard, the UNEP-OECD questionnaire on policy coherence can guide decision-makers towards greater access to funding and capacity building opportunities. Its applicability can help build interinstitutional coordination and create national enabling conditions that respond to the priorities of several MEA funding instruments, such as the GFC and the GEF. GEF-9 explicitly recognizes policy coherence, whole-of-government and whole-of-society as critical cross-cutting areas informing its programming and funding windows. Thus, the UNEP-OECD questionnaire may be helpful to 'unpack' what these concepts mean, and it could be used by MEA Focal Points to directly inform the preparation of project proposals in coordination with national GEF Focal Points and with the aim to achieve synergies in MEA implementation.

- g) **Strengthen regular communication lines between MEA, MFA and Montevideo Focal Points, as well as with UNCT Focal Points from the Central Asia region.** These important stakeholders should engage in more systematic communication, exchanges of views and ideas (formally and informally) beyond single capacity building initiatives (e.g. occasional workshops, conferences etc). From the government side, the development process for National Development Strategies, Green Economy and Green Growth Strategies, chemicals and waste management and pollution reduction and prevention strategies and plans represent important opportunities to involve the UNCTs and foster synergies with UN programming processes. From the UNCT side, the development process of the UN CAs and UNSDCFs, as well as their periodic reviews and/or monitoring and evaluation represent important opportunities to engage MEA, MFA and Montevideo Focal Points. This can help ensuring their views, suggestions and ideas are collected and reflected. In both instances, regular/quarterly meetings could be organized to facilitate this process.

2.2 On translating MEA commitments and actions into national policy and legal frameworks, enabled by environmental rights

Participants highlighted their experience with MEAs domestication through national policy and legal frameworks to combat pollution. They discussed challenges and possible solutions, as well as the role of public participation in decision-making on pollution matters to advance human rights. The discussion was informed by country presentations of their national policies and legal frameworks to implement the MEAs that were the focus of the workshop, as well as a presentation of the UNEP Montevideo Programme. The main discussion points and findings include:

- h) **Advance national regulatory and fiscal instruments to combat pollution that move beyond siloed approaches and promote integrated strategies and responses that cut across sectors and policy domains.** Embedding pollution prevention and control measures within national planning and regulatory frameworks—such as development, health, industry, and climate strategies—can help clarify responsibilities across sectors and promote an integrated approach. Fiscal tools such as taxes on toxic waste or hazardous chemicals could also support the effective application of the ‘polluter-pays’ principle, incentivizing the shift towards safer alternatives and a circular economy and generating public revenue that could be reinvested in green innovation and regulatory enforcement.
- i) **Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) and Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEAs) can be a helpful way to account for chemicals and waste management considerations across national development plans and encourage civil society engagement in decision-making, provided they are rooted in effective and enforceable legal frameworks.** National legislation on EIA and SEA should expressly include provisions accounting for chemicals and waste management to ensure that the potential risks posed by hazardous substances, industrial by-products, and waste disposal practices are systematically assessed early in the planning process. This would help support compliance with MEAs and promote a circular economy by encouraging safer and environmentally sound materials management, particularly if applied in high-impact sectors (e.g.

energy, infrastructure, land-use). Moreover, it would enhance transparency and accountability in decision-making, enabling informed participation by civil society.

- j) **The effectiveness and use of digital tools for pollution management, access to information and civil society participation in decision-making hinges on the existence of dedicated legal frameworks and their enforcement, securing rights-based approaches and civil society participation.** The many digital platforms established across the Central Asia region for disclosing information about the state of the environment (e.g. cadastres, PRTRs and other inventories and registries with relevant data on products, chemicals management and pollution), participating in decision-making (including EIA and SEA) and filing for public appeals provide significant opportunity to strengthen public trust and confidence in accountability and integrity of public institutions. However, these digital platforms for e-governance are not always recognized in legislation, integrated in e-government and open data information systems and the public is not always adequately empowered to use them and have the possibility to provide user-feedback. Such platforms would thus benefit from expressed normative recognition of the obligations on national authorities to disclose data to the public. This can be achieved, for example, through the implementation of the Aarhus Convention and its Protocol on PRTRs. Digital platforms can facilitate the publishing of comments received during EIAs and SEAs and public discussions of draft regulatory and legal acts, particularly those that relate to chemicals and waste management. Civil society organizations and environmental ombudspersons also play an important role serving as watchdogs for securing the respect and enforcement of these normative provisions. The public should have the possibility to have access to judicial and administrative review procedures to challenge decisions, acts and omissions of public authorities and private persons violating the laws relating to the environment. Their mandates should be empowered to be fulfilled effectively and to advocate for systemic improvements and policy reforms to uphold environmental rights.

2.3 On the enabling conditions and tools to improve MEAs mainstreaming across the work of the United Nations Country Teams across Central Asia

Participants highlighted their experience with regards to mainstreaming pollution issues and MEAs implementation across UN country programming, spanning the environmental, governance, rule of law, human rights and other domains. Informed by the UN Common Approach to Pollution, the main discussion points, findings and recommendations include:

- k) **Involve MEA Focal Points early on in the preparation process for UN CAs and the UNSDCF across Central Asia and embed other stakeholders' perspectives, wherever possible.** UNCTs are encouraged to engage with and involve national MEA Focal Points in the preparation of the UN CAs and in the design of the UNSDCF to enrich the analysis with their perspectives. A meaningful consultation with national MEA Focal points can inform appropriate and realistic strategic priorities or outcomes revolving around MEAs and the GFC, thus creating a proper infrastructure within the UNSDCF that can foster measurable impact at country level. The UNCTs can also rely on guidance on mainstreaming MEAs into UNSDCF developed under the MEAs bodies, such as the Basel Convention's Implementation and Compliance Committee's ["Guidance on how individual Parties can integrate actions to address their needs under the Basel Convention into](#)

[their United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks](#)”, adopted in 2025. Moreover, including the perspectives of stakeholders, such as civil society and academic research institutions could help create a common narrative on pollution issues that can speak to multiple stakeholders in the country and encourage participation and buy-in for implementation beyond traditional government stakeholders and counterparts.

- l) **UNCTs in Central Asia may experience difficulty in gathering information on the country-level progress in implementation of the MEAs and GFC targets and reflecting these meaningfully in the CAs.** Although relevant information on the level of progress with implementation can be found in the national reports submitted to the MEAs and the national state of the environment reports as well as the NAPs and NIPs and other chemicals and waste management and pollution prevention strategies and plans, gathering and synthesizing this information for the purpose the UN CA development remains a challenge. Occasionally, the status of ratification or accession of a particular MEA may be found in an annex to the UN CA, but without deeper analysis of the implementation status. A template or guidance on how to expand and standardize this information and what resources to use for this purpose may be helpful for UNCTs.
- m) **Moving towards integrated approaches in MEAs implementation that leverage the whole-of-government and whole-of-society. Relevant targets of the GFC can guide the development of integrated strategic priorities or outcomes in the UNSDCFs of the Central Asia countries.** The GFC recognizes that enhanced collaboration, cooperation and synergies at all levels can contribute to and promote MEAs implementation in a more effective manner.⁵ It provides ample opportunity to support the implementation of the BRS, Minamata, UNECE Air and Aarhus Convention and Protocol on PRTRs in an integrated manner that fosters cross-sectoral coordination and inclusive participation at all levels. GFC targets can inform the development of strategic priority areas/outcomes as well as the Results Framework of the UNSDCFs in such a way that can drive national development agendas and advance the SDGs in a mutually supportive manner. MEAs implementation in UNSDCFs should be included first in the Theory of Change (TOC) and subsequently translated into joint programmes that respond to specific indicators, results and impact (in the Results Framework), thus enabling an integrated support from multiple (two or more) UNCT member organizations. This can enable greater coordination and partnerships in programming and project portfolio management, for greater impact.
- n) **Leveraging UN CAs and UNSDCFs to raise awareness of the importance of MEAs and help ‘make the case’ to fast-track implementation and mobilize resources at country level.** Including data on the status of MEAs implementation in the UN CAs and UNSCDFs should inform the governance, political analysis and related results framework in such a way that it can provide evidence of how pollution action can support national economic and social development. Whilst this is already happening for the climate agenda, whose perception has evolved into an economic and social issue, the same cannot be equally observed for pollution. MEAs implementation should also inform the financial landscape analysis of the UN CA, clearly stating the related capacity-building

⁵ [UNEP/EA.6/INF/6](#) - Background note to support the discussions on agenda item "Cooperation with Multilateral Environment Agreements" - Note by the Secretariat.

needs as well as the existing public and private financing resources and opportunities that can support chemicals and pollution action at national level. This could help build an appropriate resource mobilization strategy at country level that can be supported by the UNCT.

- o) **The need for tailored guidance on how MEAs implementation could be addressed through other strategic priority areas (e.g. “pillars”), outcomes or results that relate to cross-cutting areas, such as gender and safeguards, human rights and rule of law in the development of UNSDCF.** The UN Common Approach to Pollution and the BRS guidance on UNSDCF include useful narratives and entry points that can support UNCTs to consider MEAs implementation beyond the traditional ‘Environment’ or ‘Planet’ pillar of the UNSDCF. Another useful entry point is the operationalization of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment, recognized by [UNGA resolution 76/300](#), which is an integral element of the Common Approach to Pollution. Similarly, the UNEP Montevideo Programme offers significant capacity building opportunities for the Central Asia countries to link MEAs with the implementation of human rights obligations and standards. This support could be reflected through specific outcomes or results of the UNSDCF.
- p) **Improve dissemination of knowledge, tools and resources developed under the Montevideo Programme’s [Law and Environment Assistance Platform](#) (LEAP) to support MEAs implementation.** The LEAP platform serves as UNEP’s digital repository of information under the Montevideo Programme and allows users to access environmental legislation, knowledge products and publications, legislative toolkits, and meeting documents and information related to the Programme’s intergovernmental meetings. For example, the LEAP platform houses the [Law and Climate Change Toolkit](#), an online tool aimed to support countries in developing and improving national climate change laws. The database enables users to access a range of national climate change legislation from around the world, searchable according to key areas of climate change governance.

3. Final recommendations and conclusions

Participants highlighted their final recommendations and conclusions as follows:

1. **Accession and implementation of MEAs remains an important avenue to drive sustainable development in Central Asia. MEAs implementation at national level should not occur in silo but promoting synergies and cooperation. Digitalization and digital transformations are a critical enabler of national synergies.** Delivering synergies across MEAs means upholding a coordinated approach across relevant stakeholders that enhances cooperation and joint planning across decision and policy-makers (national and local); an integrated approach that substantively looks at pollution sources in an interconnected manner, advancing the goals of the Global Framework on Chemicals and supported by enabling policies, laws and institutional arrangements; a rights-based approach that leverages the human right to a clean, healthy environment and environmental rights through enhanced civil society engagement and participation in decision-making. Investing in digitalization and digital transformations for data management and sharing is a key enabler of cooperation across ministries and sectors with great potential to improve public participation in pollution matters. This can be achieved through

developing nationwide digital environmental information system and the implementation of digital PRTRs promoted through the Protocol on PRTRs, which make reporting under other MEAs efficient and effective as PRTRs cover all relevant pollutants, across the economic sectors and significant sources of pollution; include releases and emissions to air, water and land; and can accommodate national priorities. Such systems are the basis for coherent and fact-based decision making in the context of pollution and waste related data collection and dissemination. MEAs implementation provides countries with unique national policy and legislative frameworks that can be directly linked to and support their national SDG implementation strategies. Chemicals and waste management and pollution prevention strategies and plans are mutually supportive of National Development Plans and strategies. In the countries of Central Asia, the two processes would benefit from a more integrated approach, which could lead to more effective implementation. This should be encouraged throughout the entire policy cycle, from design to development, implementation, review, monitoring and reporting.

2. **More cooperation and collaboration across National MEA, MFA and Montevideo Focal Points is essential to advance national synergies in MEAs implementation Central Asia. Similarly, promoting a more systematic and structured engagement between UNCTs, National MEA, MFA and Montevideo Focal Points can advance greater synergies in the work of the UNCT.** From the government side, it can strengthen the country's environmental governance conditions through advancing integrated approaches and help avoid duplications. From the UNCT side, it can enable better integration of MEAs implementation across UN CAs and UNSCDFs. This is a precondition for the delivery of more integrated support and policy advice to improve the environmental governance conditions (policies, laws and institutional arrangements) of the Central Asia countries.
3. **Harmonizing national legislation with the provisions of the MEAs and the GFC can help modernize legal frameworks across Central Asia. Supporting legal reforms, policy coherence and environmental rule of law from design to enforcement are effective preconditions for enhancing the codification of best practice for chemicals and waste management and advancing environmental rights. The Montevideo Programme and MEA Secretariats can provide the required support to the countries of Central Asia, including through training environmental legal specialists, judiciary and law enforcement officials to help close national capacity gaps.** For example, the Montevideo Programme and MEA Secretariats can provide guidance to policymakers and government officials with establishing legal frameworks for chemicals control; support countries in developing integrated waste and chemicals management legislation; strengthen national air quality frameworks; provide dedicated trainings on the development, drafting, implementation, and enforcement of legislation, including access to information, participation in decision-making and access to justice in environmental matters. Countries can directly request for assistance under the Montevideo Programme through the LEAP platform and by reaching out to MEAs Secretariats. **Relevant learning and capacity building sources are reported in Annex I of the present report.**
4. **The UN Common Approach on Pollution is a useful guidance document to advance common narratives at country level and help positioning MEAs implementation at the nexus of**

environmental governance, rule of law and human rights. However, to be meaningfully operationalized across the UNCTs in Central Asia, it requires greater awareness and investment. With the continued support of UNEP, this could include producing more practical guidance and promoting the sharing of success stories amongst countries and UNCTs from Central Asia with regards to: i) how the Common Approach can successfully inform UN programming processes on the ground (e.g. UN CAs and UNSDCFs), leading to greater inclusion and uptake of pollution issues at country level and greater presence of MEAs in outcome or results frameworks; and ii) how the Common Approach can shift national policy paradigms and boost the mobilization of financial resources and partnerships to advance the synergetic implementation of MEAs, the GFC and SDGs.

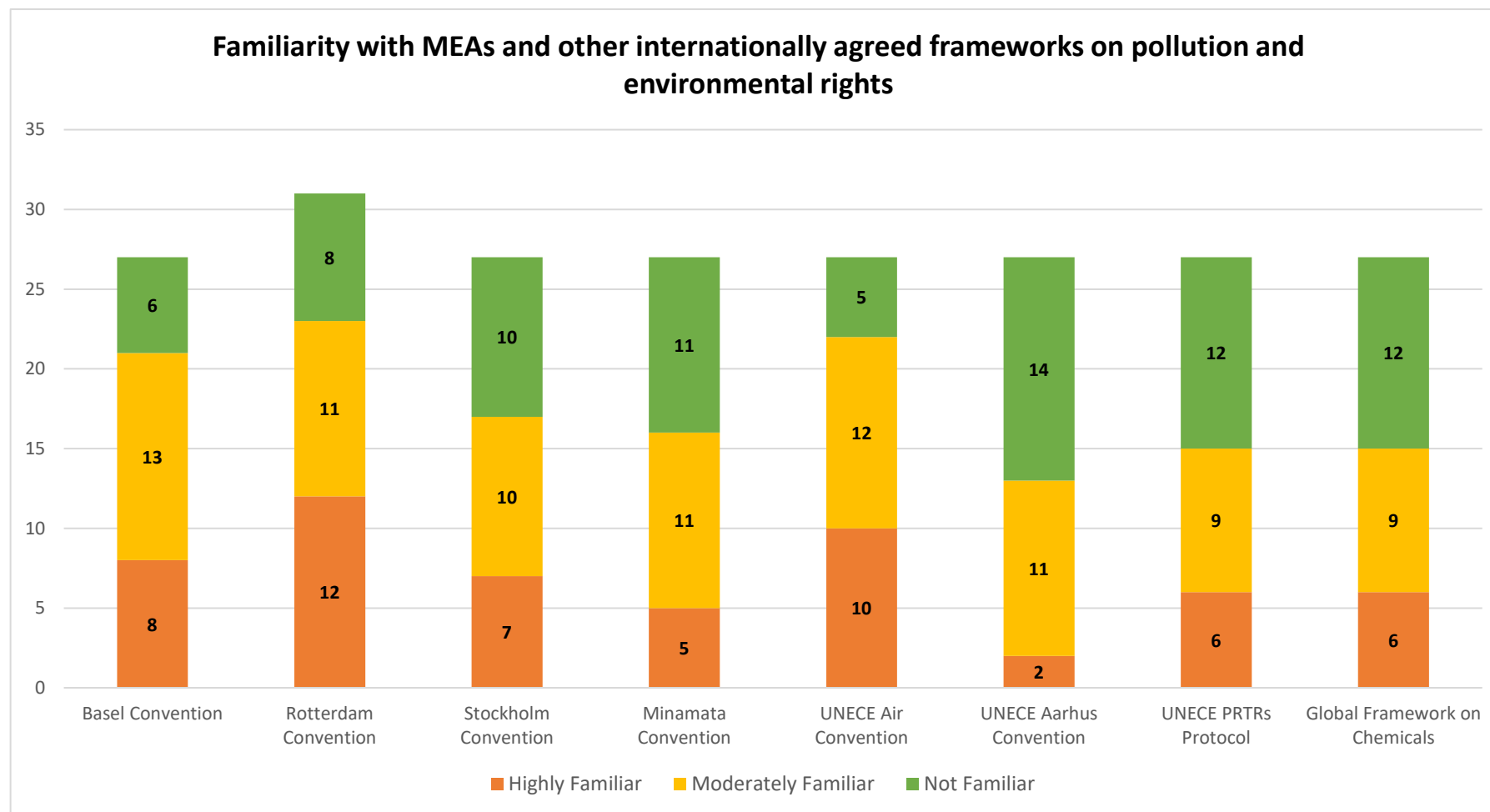
- 5. UNEP, UNECE and the MEA Secretariats should continue to create regular opportunities for training, collaboration and exchange between National MEA, MFA and Montevideo Focal Points and UNCTs in Central Asia.** The advancement of a whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach for the implementation of MEAs and the GFC requires dedicated interagency and intergovernmental support, which UNEP and UNECE, in collaboration with UNCTs and MEA Secretariats, are uniquely positioned to provide in view of their convening roles. Regular trainings, capacity building initiatives and peer-learning opportunities offer useful entry points to promote greater cooperation, collaboration and synergies for national implementation of MEAs and facilitate greater awareness and support from UNCTs.

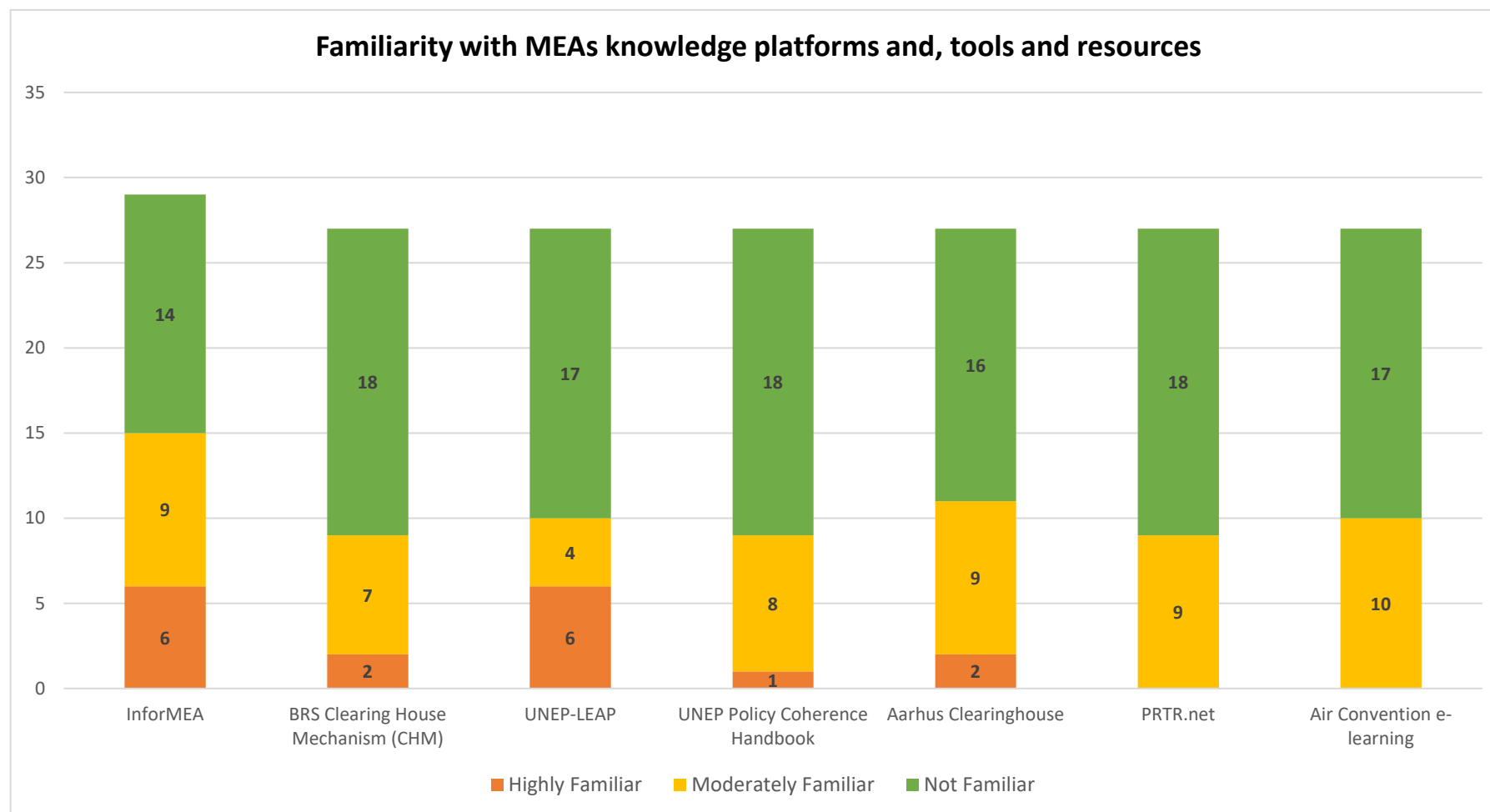
Annex I: Relevant learning and capacity building resources

<u>BRS Conventions</u>	
General information and learning materials	Guidance documents
- Joint BRS Conventions website (English). - Introductory Course to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (English and French). - Introductory Course to the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade (English). - A deep dive into the Rotterdam Convention Course (English and Russian). - Introductory Course to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (English). - The Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and their linkages with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (English).	- The 2019 Guidance on chemicals control contributing to national progress and safety (English). - The the 2023 Guide on Ambient Air Quality Legislation (English). - The Guide for the Development of National Legal Frameworks to Implement the Basel Convention (English and Russian). - The Manual for the Implementation of the Basel Convention, including the Checklist for the Legislator (English and Russian). - The Guide on the Development of National Laws to Implement the Rotterdam Convention (English). - The Guide on Developing National Legal Frameworks to Implement the Stockholm Convention (English) and Guide for the Implementation of the Stockholm Convention (English).
<u>Minamata Convention</u>	
General information and learning materials	Guidance documents
- Minamata Convention website (English). - Training course on the Minamata Convention (English with Russian translation pending). - Minamata Online webinars on obligations, reporting, financial assistance and capacity building (English with limited availability in Russian). - Minamata infographics on mercury life stages (Russian) and biodiversity (Russian).	- The repository of publications on the Minamata Convention on Mercury (English), including the 2018 Global Mercury Assessment Report (English). - The Guidance on best available techniques and best environmental practices to abate mercury emissions from sources regulated under Article 8 of the Minamata Convention on Mercury and Annex D therein (English).

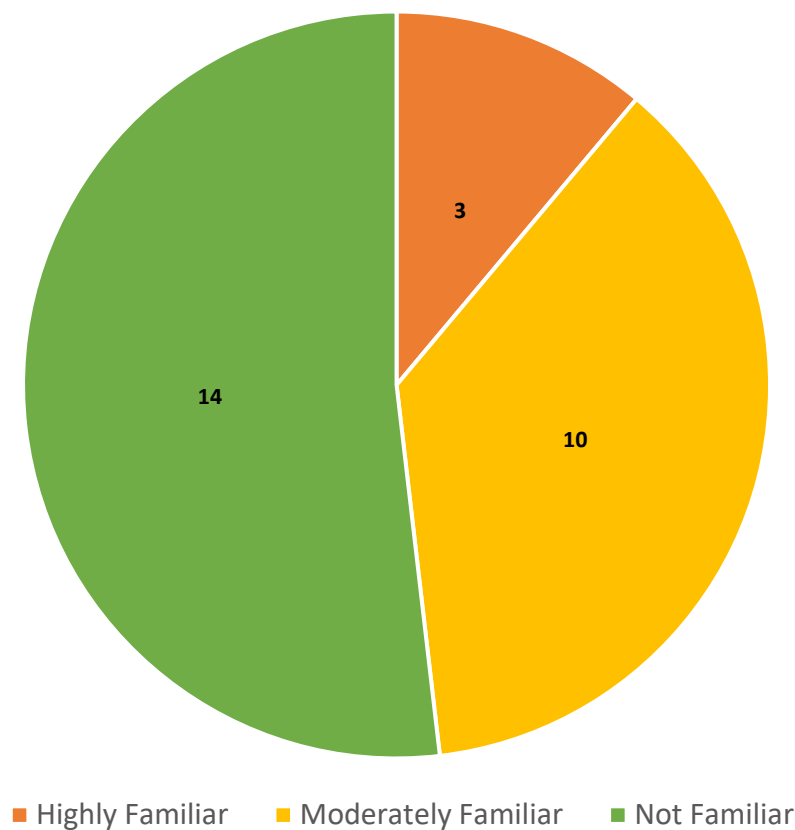
	The Guidance on best available techniques and best environmental practices (BAT/BEP) to control releases of mercury from relevant sources under Article 9 of the Minamata Convention on Mercury (English).
<u>Air Convention</u>	
General information and learning materials	Guidance documents
- Air Convention website (English). - E-learning course on the Convention and its protocols (English and Russian). - E-learning course on emission inventory development (English and Russian). - E-learning course on monitoring air pollution effects (English and Russian).	- Repository of guidance documents under the UNECE Air Convention (English and Russian). - The Guidance Document on Emission Control Techniques for Mobile Sources (English). - The Guidance Document on control techniques for emissions of sulphur, NOx, VOC, and particulate matter (including PM10, PM2.5 and black carbon) from stationary sources (English).
<u>Aarhus Convention and Protocol on PRTRs</u>	
General information and learning materials	Guidance documents
- Aarhus Convention website (English). - Protocol on PRTRs website (English). - Aarhus Clearinghouse portal (English and Russian). - PRTR.net (English).	- Aarhus Convention and Protocol on PRTRs repository of Public Participation Publications (English and Russian) and key guidance material (English and Russian). - Recommendations on the More Effective Use of Electronic Information Tools (English). - Maastricht Recommendations on Public Participation in Decision-making (English and Russian). - The Aarhus Convention: An Implementation Guide (second edition) (English and Russian). - Guidance to Implementation of the Protocol on Pollutant Release and Transfer Registers (English and Russian). - Capacity-building material (English and Russian).

Annex II: Workshop survey result



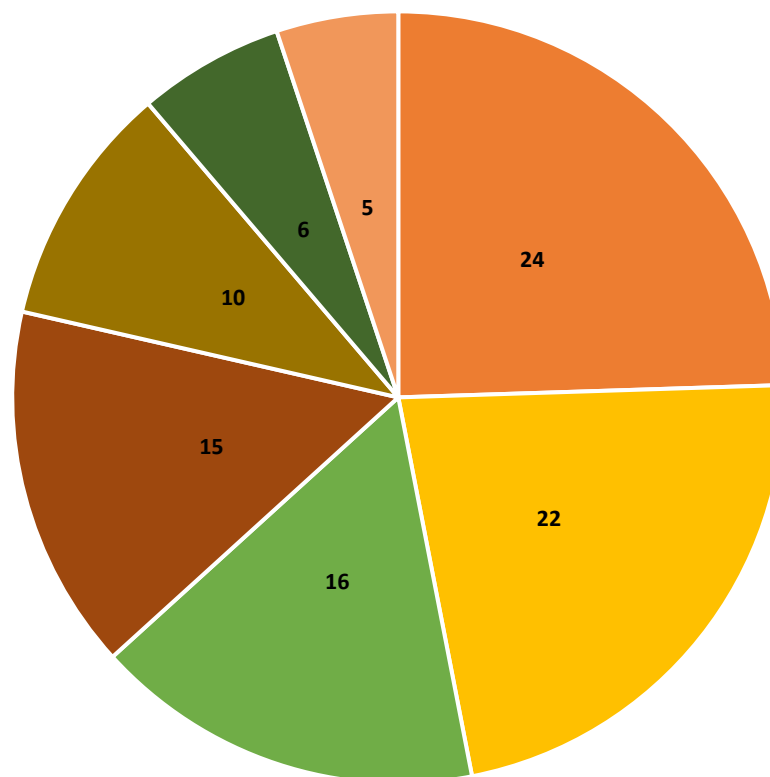


Familiarity with the UNEP Montevideo Environmental Law Programme V



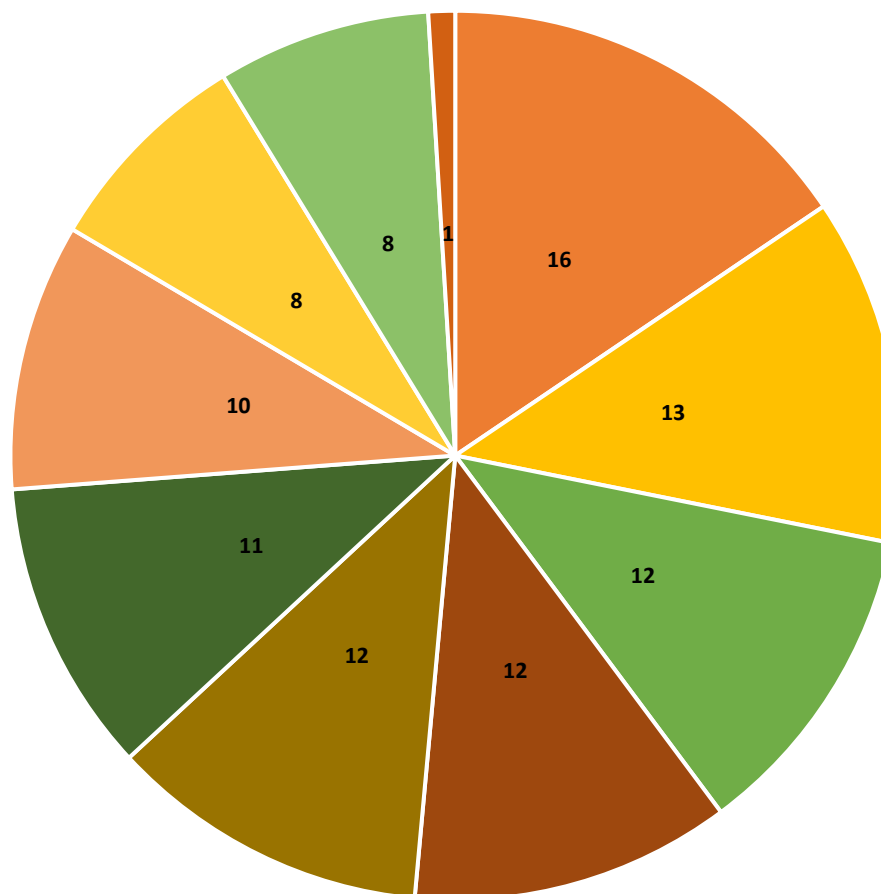
Challenges to advancing synergies in MEAs implementation at national level to combat pollution

- Lack of systems thinking and integrated approaches across the policy cycle
- Regular data exchanges across competent authorities and departments
- Institutional coordination
- Understanding and applicability of policy coherence across the policy cycle
- Political commitment
- Integration of environmental considerations across policy impact assessments
- Integrated and mutually supportive reporting



Challenges to translating MEA commitments and actions into national policy and legal frameworks to combat pollution

- Knowledge or capacity gaps of legislators
- Integration of MEAs commitments across sectoral policies (including transboundary issues)
- Lack of effective law enforcement mechanisms
- Knowledge or capacity gaps of the judiciary
- Lack of public participation in decision-making on pollution matters
- Integration of MEAs commitments into national/sectoral financing plans
- Lack of codification of legal frameworks on chemicals and wastes throughout their life cycle
- Availability/accessibility of data on MEAs implementation to decision-makers
- Political commitment
- Lack of a coordination council for integration of MEA obligations



Suggested improvements to national capacities to advance MEAs implementation to combat pollution

- Greater access to capacity building opportunities (e.g. GEF, GFC Fund)
- Greater access to financial resources
- Greater attention from UN Country Teams & other international organizations
- Greater attention from international donors
- Inclusion in UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Frameworks
- Participation in global/regional partnerships (including voluntary)

