



**BASEL CONVENTION**



**SYLLABUS**

# **Plastic Waste and the Basel Convention**

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# 1. Background

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In 2019, the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, at its 14th meeting, and the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA), at its fourth session, noted with concern that the high and rapidly increasing levels of marine litter, including plastic litter and microplastics, represent a serious environmental problem on a global scale, negatively affecting marine biodiversity, ecosystems, animal well-being, societies, livelihoods, fisheries, marine transport, recreation, tourism and economies.

The COP to the Basel Convention also emphasised that work under the Basel Convention can and will play an important role in addressing the high and rapidly increasing levels of marine plastic litter and microplastics by preventing plastic waste from entering the marine environment. In a landmark decision, the COP adopted amendments to Annexes II, VIII and IX (the Plastic Waste Amendments), making the Basel Convention the only global legally binding instrument that currently specifically addresses plastic waste.

Currently, there is no consolidated 'one-stop-shop' that Basel Convention Focal Points, Competent Authorities and other stakeholders can rely on to gain a comprehensive understanding of the steps needed and the tools and guidance available to ensure prevention and minimization, environmentally sound management and control of transboundary movement of plastic waste. This course aims to fill this gap.

The course explains the key provisions of the Basel Convention, thereby focusing on plastic waste across its three pillars:

- prevention and minimization of the generation of plastic waste;
- environmentally sound management of plastic waste; and
- control of transboundary movement of plastic waste.

While the Basel Convention covers a wide range of hazardous and other wastes, the course focuses on plastic waste and the Plastic Waste Amendments.

The course was developed by the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm (BRS) Conventions in cooperation with the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and funded through the European Union (EU) Global Public Goods and Challenges programme (GPGC).

## 2. Target Audience

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The course aims to respond to the need to provide learning opportunities for Basel Convention Focal Points and Competent Authorities, as well as other audiences, to gain an accurate understanding of the implications of the Plastic Waste Amendments with respect to the steps needed to ensure full implementation of relevant provisions of the Basel Convention. Moreover, the course aims to address the need to improve the understanding of Focal Points, Competent Authorities and others of the tools and guidance that have been and/or are being developed/updated to facilitate implementation of the Basel Convention with respect to plastic waste.

The primary target audiences of the course are:

- Focal Points and Competent Authorities of the Basel Convention;
- Decision- and policy-makers responsible for developing and implementing policy, and institutional and regulatory frameworks related to plastic waste; and
- Law enforcement authorities, technical experts and practitioners engaged in initiatives and actions on plastic waste.

The course also offers valuable knowledge and insights for the following audiences:

- Actors in the private sector engaged in activities related to plastic waste throughout the life cycle, from producers and retailers to end users and waste management operators;
- Civil society organizations with an interest in addressing plastic pollution; and
- Any interested individuals with some environmental or waste management knowledge.

The course is suitable for participants irrespective of their level of pre-existing knowledge of the Basel Convention and plastic waste. It has a modular structure, which gives the learner a maximum degree of flexibility to choose which modules are most relevant to their own needs.

# 3. Learning Objectives

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The course does not aim to provide participants with detailed technical knowledge but rather with a solid overview. It presents the range of guidance and tools available under the Basel Convention, so that the learner can know when and how to use them to tackle plastic waste.

After completing the course, learners will be able to:

- Summarize the key trends, challenges and opportunities related to plastic waste management at global and national level;
- Discuss the Basel Convention and its key provisions and annexes as well as the role of the Conference of the Parties (COP) and its subsidiary bodies with respect to plastic waste;
- Explain how different types of plastic waste are classified and must be managed under the Basel Convention;
- Identify the legal and institutional arrangements that can be put in place at the national level to effectively implement the Basel Convention, with a focus on plastic waste;
- Choose effective and efficient strategies to prevent and minimize the generation of plastic waste under specific national circumstances;
- Identify appropriate tools and guidelines for the environmentally sound management of plastic waste in accordance with the Basel Convention under specific national circumstances;
- Explain actions needed to comply with the Basel Convention, including relating to the prior informed consent (PIC) procedure and the Plastic Waste Amendments; and
- Explain key steps in preventing and combatting illegal traffic of plastic waste.

## 4. Methodology

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The course is self-paced and adapted to the schedule of full-time working professionals. The three modules of the course are self-standing and can be completed in any order. For those with no or very limited background knowledge, it is recommended to complete each module in the given order. More experienced users may wish to choose specific modules individually to deepen their knowledge on a particular topic in a targeted manner.

Participants are provided with the opportunity to learn through various experiences: absorb (read and watch), interact (activity) and reflect (relate to one's own reality). The eight lessons, plus the introductory lesson, are interactive, meaning that they make use of clickable objects, such as buttons, hotspots, tabs, accordions, flipping cards, videos, etc. Moreover, within each lesson, users will find activities that will help them to focus on the key concepts presented. To complete each module, beside the interactive lessons, learners will have to pass a short knowledge check with, for example, multiple choice questions.

# 5. Course Structure and Content

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The course is structured in three modules, each module including two to three lessons:

Module 1: Plastic Waste and the Basel Convention

- Introductory lesson: Setting the scene - plastic waste
- **Lesson 1:** What is the Basel Convention and why does it matter?
- **Lesson 2:** What are the Plastic Waste Amendments?
- **Lesson 3:** What legal and institutional arrangements are needed?

Module 2: Prevention, Minimization and Environmentally Sound Management of Plastic Waste

- **Lesson 4:** How can we prevent and minimize the generation of plastic waste?
- **Lesson 5:** How can we manage plastic waste in an environmentally sound manner?

Module 3: Transboundary Movements and Illegal Traffic of Plastic Waste

- **Lesson 6:** How can we control transboundary movements of plastic waste?
- **Lesson 7:** How can we combat illegal traffic in plastic waste?
- **Lesson 8:** What is the role of customs in combating illegal traffic in plastic waste?



## MODULE 1: Plastic Waste and the Basel Convention

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### **INTRODUCTORY LESSON:** Setting the scene - plastic waste

#### **Content**

This introduction familiarises the learner with the key challenges around plastic waste, including trends in production and waste generation. The sources, pathways and adverse impacts of plastic waste on human health and the environment will be discussed. Moreover, the linkages between plastic waste and climate change will be elaborated upon. The main obstacles to the environmentally sound management of plastic waste and related impacts will be explored, while also hinting towards potential solutions.

#### **Learning objectives**

Upon completion of this introduction, the participants will be able to:

- characterise the scope of the global plastic waste challenge;
- explain the linkages between plastic waste and climate change; and
- explain the causes and impacts of unsound management of plastic waste.

### ● **LESSON 1:** What is the Basel Convention and why does it matter?

#### **Content**

This lesson explains the background of the Basel Convention, including the challenge of illegal traffic in hazardous and other wastes. The lesson also explains the Convention's objectives, key provisions, mechanisms and processes. It provides information on the scope of, and the waste streams regulated by, the Convention. It also briefly explores the synergies with the Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions as well as relevant regional environmental agreements, such as the Bamako Convention.

## Learning objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, the participant will be able to:

- explain why, when and with what objectives the Basel Convention was created;
- discuss how the COP to the Basel Convention and its subsidiary bodies operate; and
- explain the scope, key provisions and mechanisms of the Basel Convention.

## ● LESSON 2: What are the Plastic Waste Amendments?

### Content

This lesson will introduce learners to the Plastic Waste Amendments, adopted by decision BC-14/12 in 2019. It explains the implications of the Plastic Waste Amendments, in particular regarding the classification of plastic waste and related obligations in terms of the prior informed consent (PIC) procedure.

Moreover, this lesson provides a brief overview of other relevant actions taken by the COP, notably decision BC-14/13 - also adopted at the 14th meeting in 2019 - pursuant to which, among others, the Basel Convention Plastic Waste Partnership (PWP) was established.

## Learning objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, the participants will be able to:

- explain which types of plastic waste may or may not be subject to the PIC procedure, taking into account national classifications and definitions;
- identify measures at the national level to implement the key provisions and mechanisms of the Basel Convention to the Plastic Waste Amendments; and
- name further actions on plastic waste taken by the COP and Parties.

## ● LESSON 3: What legal and institutional arrangements are needed?

### Content

This lesson explores measures needed to set up the legal and institutional arrangements for the implementation of the Basel Convention.

It explores the legal and regulatory requirements, the importance of inter-agency coordination, the role of external stakeholders and the tools available to support Parties. The lesson will also give examples of regional measures already in place. A link is made with the Plastic Waste Amendments and their implementation at the national level. The approach taken depends on national circumstances and the overall legal/institutional system.

## Learning objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, the participants will be able to:

- identify feasible steps to enable implementation of the Basel Convention at the national level;
- explain the importance of collaboration or coordination mechanisms at national and regional levels; and
- identify tools to establish legal and institutional frameworks.





## MODULE 2: Prevention, Minimization and Environmentally Sound Management of Plastic Waste

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### ● LESSON 4: How can we prevent and minimize the generation of plastic waste?

#### Content

This lesson explores the waste management hierarchy, clarifying the advantages of environmentally sound management of plastic waste at source.

It highlights the objectives and key elements of efficient and effective waste prevention and minimization strategies, such as decoupling, resource efficiency and eco-design, and linkages with the Stockholm Convention measures in this respect, illustrated by concrete examples.

To allow you to apply the knowledge to specific national and/or local circumstances, the lesson explains which type of strategies can be applied, approaches per sector and the involvement of stakeholders.

#### Learning objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, the participants will be able to:

- explain the waste hierarchy and its benefits;
- identify options for waste prevention and minimization policies; and
- describe the key steps in designing and implementing such policies.

### ● LESSON 5: How can we manage plastic waste in an environmentally sound manner?

#### Content

This lesson delves deeper into the concept of environmentally sound management and its criteria, as defined under the Basel Convention. You will learn about tools that can be applied to promote, facilitate and ensure environmentally sound management of plastic waste at all stages of the life cycle, through principles, policies and practical arrangements. Benefits and constraints that different approaches entail, thereby enabling the choice of appropriate solutions based on the specific local and national circumstances, will be presented. Lastly, the lesson highlights the requirements of the Basel Convention to ensure that any transboundary movement of hazardous and other wastes lead to its environmentally sound management to be confirmed upon the completion of the movement.

#### Learning objectives

Upon completion of this lesson, the participants will be able to:

- describe the framework and elements of environmentally sound management, in particular with respect to plastic waste;
- identify tools and approaches for the environmentally sound management of plastic waste, including for the development of a national inventory of plastic waste; and
- describe the key steps in assessing national environmentally sound management capacity and designing and implementing plastic waste environmentally sound management policies.



## MODULE 3: Transboundary Movements and Illegal Traffic of Plastic Waste

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### ● LESSON 6: How can we control transboundary movements of plastic waste?

#### Content

This lesson explains the provisions for the transboundary movements of plastic waste under the Basel Convention. It details the different stages of the prior informed consent (PIC) procedure, relevant documentation and the role

of the competent authorities. It also highlights the implications of the Ban Amendment. Finally, the lesson looks at additional measures that can be taken to prevent unwanted transboundary movements of plastic wastes, in particular using the Ban Amendment and the possibility of notifying national import/export prohibitions, as well as linkages with relevant regional environmental agreements, such as the Bamako Convention.

### **Learning objectives**

Upon completion of this lesson, the participants will be able to:

- explain the main elements of the PIC procedure, conditions for transboundary movements, relevant elements of the PIC for enforcement purposes and how they apply to plastic wastes;
- identify which documents and what information should accompany transboundary movements of wastes; and
- explain what the Ban Amendment is and how this, as well as other regulatory measures, such as import/export prohibitions, can be used to prevent unwanted transboundary movements of plastic waste.

## **LESSON 7: How can we combat illegal traffic of plastic waste?**

### **Content**

This lesson describes the key elements for an efficient and effective control regime to prevent and combat illegal traffic, including inter-agency collaboration for enforcement of the Basel Convention. It explains what is considered illegal traffic and how to deal with it, including take-back procedures. It also explains the consequences of confirmed cases of illegal traffic.

### **Learning objectives**

Upon completion of this lesson, the participants will be able to:

- describe what constitutes illegal traffic of wastes under the Basel Convention;
- discuss the procedures, tools and methods for the take-back of waste as a result of illegal traffic; and
- describe how inter-agency collaboration can be set up.

## **LESSON 8: What is the role of customs in combating illegal traffic in plastic waste?**

### **Content**

This lesson describes the main steps required to undertake a risk assessment, develop risk indicators and perform administrative and physical checks. It explains how to identify plastic wastes. Visual screening and sampling are discussed as well as the use of codes during the identification process. Special attention is paid to the safety of the officers whilst performing visual screening.

### **Learning objectives**

Upon completion of this lesson, the participants will be able to:

- identify tools that can be applied to target possible illegal shipments of plastic waste;
- explain what a risk assessment of transboundary movements of plastic waste entails; and
- explain customs codes and other systems that assist in identifying plastic waste.

## 6. Certification

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The successful completion of the course rewards the learner with a certificate. To complete the course, the learner must complete all three modules and pass each associated quiz with a minimum grade of 70% from no more than three attempts. The completion of each module also rewards the learner with a badge.

## 7. Learning resources

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To support learning, the course features a range of learning activities and experiences such as interactive lessons, videos, learning journals, quizzes and external resources.

### **Video presentations**

Each module is briefly introduced in a video format. This could be in the form of a talk by a subject-matter expert or via an animated video. The videos walk the learner through the content of the module, specify the learning objectives and highlight the main concepts and principles that will be discussed.

### **Interactive lessons**

The interactive lessons provide the learner with the content necessary to achieve the 2-3 specific learning objectives and contain a series of interactive spaces. These guide the learner through the various themes and key messages of the lesson in a coherent and progressive manner. Each lesson features a variety of instructional tools, such as clickable objects, navigation buttons, hotspots, tabs, accordions, flipping cards, videos, check-for-understanding spaces, etc.

### **Learning journals**

The learning journals are documents which accompany the interactive lessons and contain the same content in a static format for off-line consultation.

### **Check-for-understanding:**

Interactive quizzes in various forms, and other means to test and solidify the knowledge of the learner, will be spread throughout each module, typically after certain sub-themes have been discussed.

### **Final quizzes:**

Each module is assessed through a final quiz. To complete a module, after consulting its associated interactive lessons, learners must successfully answer questions in a final quiz. The quiz assesses the achievement of the learning objectives for each module. Each quiz can be attempted a maximum of three times. Passing a quiz with at least 70% rewards learners with a badge associated with the specific module. Once the three quizzes are passed and learners obtain the three badges, they can download a certificate of completion from the course 'Certification' section.

### **Further reading:**

A list of reference materials for further reading will be provided at the end of each module.

### **Course evaluation**

Participants will be requested to provide feedback on the course by filling in a feedback form that can be accessed in the 'Certificate and Course Evaluation' section on the course home page.

# 8. Technical Requirements

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## Browser:

- The course works best with Firefox 3.6 or higher (download for free at <https://www.mozilla.org/en-GB/>)
- The course is also compatible with Google Chrome (download for free at <https://www.google.com/intl/en/chrome/>)
- For technical reasons, it is not recommended to use Internet Explorer.

Note: JavaScript & Cookies must be enabled.

## Software:

- Adobe Acrobat Reader (download for free at <http://www.adobe.com/products/acrobat/readstep2.html>).
- Adobe Flash Player (download for free at <https://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/>)
- Microsoft Office (Windows or Apple version) or Open Office (download for free at <http://www.openoffice.org>)

Platform: Windows 95, 98, 2000, NT, ME, XP or superior; MacOS 9 or MacOS X Hardware: 64MB of RAM, 1 GB of free disk space

Modem: 56 K