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It is a known and publicly recognized fact that while Costa Rica is in many aspects an environmental leader on conservation issues, pressing pollution problems have not received the same level of attention and now demand urgent action. This necessary re-focus on “brown issues” will require new and improved policies, better inter-agency coordination, and efficient management tools.

The National Development Plan of Costa Rica establishes that the country has to consolidate a national system of planning on sustainable development where environmental management must be on a transversal axis. The creation of the National Commission on Hazardous Substances (CONSUEPEL) is a step forward in our efforts to modernize the environmental sector. The purpose of CONSUEPEL is to recommend policies, strategies, and programs of action for the management of substances of concern. CONSUEPEL comprises the Ministry of Environment and Energy, the Ministry of Health, Ministry of Agriculture, NGOs, Academic Sector, and other members of the Civil Society.

Since the creation of CONSUEPEL we can see now the benefits of this integrated work:

- Identification of actors from different organizations at the local level, joining efforts to comply with the Agreements related to hazardous substances
- Better image (inside and outside the country), and more credibility (trust from the donors) International Cooperation: Canada, Holland, UNO, etc: We already did Regional and National PRTR Workshops. We are working on the Project on Clean-Up of POPs. We will work together with UNITAR to Prepare the National Profile, to set priorities and to Exchange Information for Sound Chemicals Management. We started with the Alternatives to Methyl Bromide Project in the country, and we also submitted the NIP Proposal on POPs.

The Ministry of Environment and Energy is taking the necessary measures to establish a suitable institutional framework with the creation of the Department of Management of Environmental Quality within MINAE. This Department will perform at a strategic level (i.e., policy definition; development of norms and national compliance and enforcement plans; interaction with other national environmental entities); and at an operational level (specifically oriented towards the control and prevention of contamination; i.e., productive actions and use of the natural resources).

The Department of Management of Environmental Quality is working on the consolidation of a strategy that includes the design of the technical norms required to control and promote the sound management of the toxic and hazardous substances, such as POPs. Specific efforts will be developed to consolidate a National Plan of Implementation of the International Conventions related to the use of dangerous substances, like the Stockholm Convention, Basel Convention, the Montreal Protocol and the Rotterdam Convention, among others; as well as to make the inventories the reduction, the sound management and the disposal of toxic wastes .

At the **regional** level we have to mention that countries have gathered together into the Central American Integration System (SICA) where the Ministers of Environment of the 7 countries of the Region (and recently the Dominican Republic) meet and which has existed since 1993 and comprises the following subsystems:

- Economical Integration**
- Social Integration**
- Political Integration**
- Environmental Integration (CCAD)***,

The Ministers of Environment and Agriculture met on April 4, 2003 and as a result of this meeting was a Regional Mandate to establish synergies between international agreements, *inter alia*:

- Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutant
- Basel Convention of Transboundary Movements on the Control of Hazardous Wastes Convention and their Disposal
- Rotterdam Convention on Prior Informed Consent
- Regional Agreement on Transboundary Movements on the Control of Hazardous Wastes Convention and their Disposal

All above leads us to strengthen intersectoral-governmental organizations: Environment, Health, Agriculture, among others. As we can see, there are joint efforts between countries and within the countries as well, for now we know that “***Working together is the key to success***”.

And as a country, our main goal is: “To promote a process that will harmonize the national legislation and incorporate the international agreements and responsibilities. At the same time, to take actions to modernize the organization and operation of those dependencies that offer services in this area, in order to improve the levels of efficiency in the satisfying of the users needs”.