

**Opening speech by Ms. Fatoumata Ouane,  
representative of UNEP Chemicals and Stockholm  
Convention Secretariat**

You Excellency Eng . Maged George Elias, Minister of State for Environmental Affairs of Egypt, Your excellency Charles Edouard Ambassador of Switzerland in Egypt, colleagues and representatives of Intergovernmental organizations, colleagues and representatives of countries, dear participants, I have the pleasure to address this assembly on behalf of UNEP and the Secretariats of Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions and to welcome you at this sub-regional workshop on the implementation of Stockholm Convention and synergies with other chemical related agreements.

During the past year 2 agreements designed for protecting human health and the environment from the inappropriate use of chemicals have entered in force.

Your countries are therefore called and have committed to face an increasing weight of responsibilities in this connection, for the benefit of present and future generations but nonetheless it represents a load.

Conscious of these emerging duties and committed to walk the way to safer environment with you, UNEP strives through its capacity building programme to promote positive technical, ecological and political changes that will contribute to global sustainable development and thereby improve people's living conditions and prospects. In doing that we are fortunate to be able to rely on a similar commitment from the government of Switzerland who is giving us the financial means to foster safe chemical management in countries and to promote synergies.

The third and indispensable element of the partnership is you the country partners and we acknowledge your dedication to the cause we are serving.

Excellency Eng . Maged George Elias, the efforts of your country and your commitment that led to the establishment of the Egyptian hazardous substance information and management system and to the successful completion of phase 3 of the Egyptian national implementation that is entering now in phase 4, the last substantive one are encouragements for us.

The challenge ahead of us is however big and calls for comprehensive concepts and decisive action. We need to consider all resources, knowledge and capacity to face this challenge. Two elder conventions (Montreal and Basel) which also convey concerns on specific action of specific chemicals or a specific lifecycle of chemicals have been in place for a while and the success of our actions necessitates inclusion of their knowledge and wisdom. We need to promote synergies among all.

Although these conventions may seem limited in number of chemicals or segment, they cover altogether the entire lifecycle of chemicals and management needs, and therefore set the capabilities to deal with the whole range of chemical management. This is important if we recall that some 500 million tons of chemicals are produced, used and processed worldwide each year. Damage to human health by chemicals and

pollution of natural resources jeopardises the livelihoods of the entire population and Chemicals know no boundaries as shown by the case of the POP, the travelers without passport they have been called by Dr. Topfer, the executive director of UNEP.

In less than 3 months the first conference of the parties of Stockholm Convention will be held in Punte del Este, Uruguay. 9 of the countries participating in this workshop are parties and will need to start the race against the calendar to meet their obligations within deadline. Together we will endeavour to shed some light on the path during this week. The Stockholm Convention national implementation plans being developed by countries will provide a unique opportunity to access donors funding for chemical management activities and this will also be addressed.

The issue of complementarity between the conventions has been on the table of other gatherings even in the region and some understanding had been reached.

Hence we do not have to reinvent the wheel, but we must find the ways to make it operational in the particular circumstances of the region. We should strive for action and must pay increased attention to the way we do things and not just what we do. I invite you to build on previous discussions, to shape concrete processes for achieving coordinated implementation of the Chemical conventions with particular emphasis on stakeholders' knowledge and potentials, Best practices and Integration of activities.

Your excellencies, dear colleagues and participants, I cannot end this speech without special thanks to the Ministry of State for Environment Affairs of Egypt and its Environmental affairs agency for the professional assistance and kind hospitality, the Regional Center for Training and Technology Transfer for the Arab States for their collaboration in the organization of the workshop and again the government of Switzerland for generous support. And moreover I thank the participants and your Excellencies for taking time from your overloaded agendas to be with us for a while or for more.