

Environmental Conventions

What is a Convention or Multi-lateral Agreement?

A convention is a legally binding international treaty that may be ratified/ endorsed by member states. Conventions are aimed at collectively addressing specific issues by a number of member states.

Which Conventions have been signed and ratified by the Government of Zimbabwe?

- The Convention on International Trade on Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES);
- The Montreal Protocol;
- The Convention on Biological Diversity;
- The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change;
- The Bamako Convention;
- The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)

The CITES Convention

CITES (The Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora also known as the Washington Convention) is a multilateral treaty that was drafted as a result of a resolution adopted in 1963 at a meeting of the international Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN). The convention was opened for signature in 1973 but came into force on 1 July, 1975. Recognising that wild flora and fauna in their many beautiful and varied forms are an irreplaceable part of natural systems of the earth which must be protected for this and the generations to come, its aim was to:

- Encourage member states to be the best protectors of their wild flora and fauna;
- Ensure that international trade in a variety of wild animals and plants does not threaten the survival of the species in the wild;
- Protect certain species of wild flora and fauna from over exploitation through international trade; it protects more than 34, 000 species of animals and plants.

The Ramsar Convention

The 2nd February each year is World Wetlands Day. This day marks the date of the adoption of the Convention on Wetlands on 2 February 1971, in the Iranian city of Ramsar. The inter-governmental treaty promotes national action and international cooperation for the conservation and wise use of wetlands and their resources. Zimbabwe ratified it on 11 February 2012 and has 7 wetlands which were designated as wetlands of international importance (Ramsar sites) namely the Victoria Falls, Driefontein Grasslands, Middle Zambezi/Mana Pools, Lake Chivero, Monavale Vlei, Chinhoyi Caves and Cleverland Dam.

The Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)

Also known as the Biodiversity Convention was opened for signature at the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro on 5 June 1992 and entered into force on 29 December 1993. The earth's biological resources are vital to humanity's economic and social development. As a result there is growing recognition that biological diversity is a global asset of tremendous value to present and future generations. At the same time the threat to species and ecosystems has never been so great as it is today. The Convention's objective was to develop national strategies for the conservation and sustainable use of biological diversity and has three main goals namely;

- The conservation of biological diversity (or biodiversity);
- The sustainable use of its components and
- The fair and equitable sharing of benefits arising from genetic resources.

The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCC)

This is an international Environmental Treaty negotiated at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), informally known as the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June 1992. Its objective is to stabilise greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that prevents dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system.

The Bamako Convention

This is a Convention of African nation which bans the importation into Africa and the control of

trans boundary movement and management of hazardous waste within Africa. It was negotiated by twelve nations of the Organisation of African Union in Bamako, Mali in January, 1991 but came into force in 1998. The objective was to prohibit the importation of hazardous (including radioactive waste).

The Montreal Protocol

The Montreal Protocol on Substances that Deplete the Ozone Layer entered into force in 1989. Zimbabwe ratified the protocol in 1992 but it came into force in 1993. Its aim is to protect the ozone layer by phasing out the production of numerous substances believed to be responsible for ozone depletion; these include several groups of halogenated hydrocarbons that have been shown to play a role in ozone depletion. These contain either chlorine or bromine.

The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification

The Convention was meant to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa. It was adopted in Paris on 17 June and came into force in December 1996. The United Nations General Assembly acknowledge that desertification and drought are a global problem as they affect all regions of the world and require joint commitment of individuals and organizations to work together in minimizing this problem. It also aims to mitigate the effects of drought through national action programmes that incorporate long term strategies supported by international cooperation and partnerships.

The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants

Better known as the POPs Treaty, the agreement is a legally binding and meant to protect human health and the environment from some of the most dangerous chemicals on earth. POPs are defined by their persistence in the environment, their bioaccumulation in nature and in people, the harm they cause often far from the source and adverse impacts. This treaty was signed in 2001 but was effective May 2004. Zimbabwe ratified it on 31 March 2011. It calls on parties to eliminate the production of POPs, minimise unintentional sources, clean up and safely manage remaining stockpiles and waste.

Some of the POPs listed in the Convention are agricultural chemicals such as aldrin, chlordane, dieldrin, endrin as well as industrial chemicals such as hexachlorobenzene, polychlorinated biphenyls and pesticides such as DDT and dioxins. Some are unintentionally produced as

industrial by products and through combustion processes.

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