

Opening Statement

By Ms. Sachiko Kuwabara-Yamamoto, Executive Secretary of the Basel Convention

At the

Workshop on Illegal Traffic

Bratislava, Slovak Republic, 3 to 5 October 2006

Excellencies, distinguished delegates, ladies and gentlemen,

It is with sincere regret that I cannot be with you today at the occasion of this workshop on illegal traffic. Illegal traffic in hazardous wastes is a matter of great concern, with more and more cases grabbing the attention of the media each month. The prevention of illegal traffic will improve human health, particularly among the most vulnerable, and will protect our environment from possible further degradation at the hands of improperly regulated disposal of hazardous wastes. Furthermore, I believe that the prioritisation of the prevention of illegal traffic in countries with economies in transition is of crucial importance so as to enable such countries to develop in a sustainable manner, with limited detriment to the environment, thus allowing continued enjoyment of the environment and resources in the long term.

I am convinced that workshops, such as the present one, are essential tools for forging a concerted regional approach to address this grave problem.

I am pleased to note that delegations are comprised of persons from different agencies involved in the prevention, detection and control of illegal traffic. Bringing together such expertise to this workshop will be invaluable to encouraging and improving interagency cooperation and sound information exchange in order to effectively deal with cases of illegal traffic. I hope this is the first of many training sessions on illegal traffic involving such key actors in enforcement.

I note that this workshop will be the first to use the newly adopted Training Manual on Illegal Traffic for Customs Officers and other Enforcement Agencies. The Manual was developed and revised pursuant to decisions of the Conference of the Parties of the Basel Convention. We would be grateful to receive any comments you may have on your experiences in using this Manual.

I am pleased to note that there shall be presentations from different organisations involved in combating illegal traffic at both the regional and international level. I am most grateful to these organisations for their most valuable participation in this workshop. I look forward to collaborating closely with all these organisations and individuals in addressing issues of relevance to the Basel Convention in the future, as such cooperation is essential to creating a coherent regime at both the regional and international levels to combat the potential risks posed by the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes to human health and the environment.

Finally, I would like to express my gratitude to the Government of the Slovak Republic for kindly hosting this workshop, and to the Technical Assistance Information Exchange Instrument of the European Commission (TAIEX) for most generously providing the means, which allow us to meet here today. I also thank the Government of Germany for its

invaluable contribution of Mr. Wuttke's expertise to this workshop. I would also like to express my gratitude to the Basel Convention Regional Centre for Training and Technology Transfer in Central and Eastern Europe, under the capable direction of Ms. Dana Lapesova, for its excellent work in organising this workshop.

I wish you all very open and productive discussions in the following days.