The BRS COP meetings were held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 1 to 12 May 2023. A total of 1,206 people attended, representing 175 parties and 143 observer organisations, including 77 non-governmental organisations (including PAN Africa), five intergovernmental organisations, 16 regional centres and 18 UN organisations.

The Basel Convention adopted several decisions, the most important of which concerns the technical guidelines on plastic waste. This document explains how to manage such waste in an environmentally sound manner, and comes at just the right time, given the ongoing negotiations for a new treaty on plastic pollution.

The Rotterdam Convention has listed only one of the seven chemicals recommended by its Scientific Subsidiary Body. Given this long-standing failure to list chemicals, the effectiveness of the Convention was discussed in depth. Parties agreed to establish an intersessional process to gather information from Parties on their difficulties with listing decisions, including the potential direct and indirect effects of listing. Delegations discussed a proposal to add a new Annex to the Convention, which would list chemicals on which Parties cannot reach consensus. For those ratifying the new Annex, the chemicals listed would be
subject to the Convention’s Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure. At the end of the vote, the proposal failed to achieve the three-quarters majority required to amend the Convention, by a narrow margin.

The global monitoring report on the Stockholm Convention has shown that the Convention is contributing to the observed reduction in concentrations of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) in people and on the planet. The parties agreed to eliminate the production and use of Methoxychlor, a pesticide, Dechlorane Plus, a flame retardant, and UV-328, an ultraviolet filter used in plastics. For Dechlorane Plus and UV-328, specific derogations have been provided for certain equipment whose production and use would be authorised until 2041, for medical devices, and 2044, for other uses subject to derogation. Perhaps most importantly, the COP adopted a compliance mechanism, something that had eluded the parties since COP1.