

African Response to Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes

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Abstract: Control or management of transboundary movement of hazardous wastes is a global challenge. The industries in the developed states generate hazardous wastes in their activities. Developed states have stringent laws and regulations for the disposal of hazardous wastes. The industries have to dispose hazardous wastes in an environmentally sound manner. It is cost effective to dispose wastes in developed states. They target developing states mostly in Africa where they can dump their hazardous wastes. African states do not possess strict laws and policies for the protection of the environment and human lives. They also lack information to make an informed consent in the disposal of hazardous wastes. Basel convention regulates the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes on an international level. However, the African states want a total ban on the movement of hazardous wastes from developed states on their territories. Bamako convention precludes the movement of hazardous wastes on the African continent from the other countries. The paper opines that each state should dispose its hazardous wastes in an environmentally sound manner on its territory.

Keywords: Transboundary movement; hazardous wastes; disposal; environmentally sound manner; Africa

1. Introduction

The generation and transboundary movements of hazardous wastes and their disposal pose a significant threat to human health and the environment (Lipman, 1999, p. 266). Hazardous wastes are produced by industrialized states. Developed states need a place to dispose hazardous wastes especially in developing states. According to Greenpeace, industrialized nations produce approximately 400 million of hazardous waste per year (Akinnusi, 2001, p. 306). Developed states

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choose developing nations for the disposal of hazardous wastes because it is cheap to do so. Developing states are aggrieved by this situation because it deteriorates the environment and affects human lives. This problem has become an international issue and states have made conventions to regulate or prevent the movement of wastes. The Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Wastes and their Disposal (Basel Convention, 1989) has been convened by the United Nations in order to regulate the problem of hazardous wastes. This convention seeks to manage and control the movement of hazardous wastes on the international level.

African nations need to prevent the import of hazardous wastes in Africa. They were not appraised by the Basel Convention as they wanted to preclude hazardous wastes on the African continent. The Convention on the Ban of Import into Africa and the Control of the Transboundary Movement and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa (Bamako Convention, 1991) assists African states to prevent hazardous wastes on their territories. They have demonstrated a quest to prevent transboundary movement of hazardous wastes in their areas as they pose negative effects on the population and environment. However, hazardous wastes remain a challenge in the most developing countries (Dladla, Machete & Shale, 2016, p. 475). This article analyses the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes with particular emphasis on Africa against the other mostly developed states as they produce and generate hazardous wastes. This research also analyses the Basel convention and Bamako convention for their impact on the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes.

2. Production and Disposal of Hazardous Wastes

The developed states produce enormous hazardous wastes that need to be disposed. They have enacted laws to regulate the disposal of wastes in an environmentally sound manner. As it is costly to dispose hazardous wastes in the developed states, they mostly target developing states in Africa as they do not have stringent laws and regulations to protect the environment. There is a number of role players involved in the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes. Firstly, there are the producers of wastes, comprising mainly large industries from the developed nations, who produce hazardous wastes and want to dispose them in a cost-effective manner (Tladi, 2000, p. 210). Industries use lots of monies to dispose hazardous wastes in developed states. They are multinational companies and

operate in different countries. They often set up plants in developing states in order to avoid obligations that are imposed by developed nations. In this way, they have opportunity to avoid strict rules and regulations established by developed states. Secondly there are the developed nations (Tladi, 2000, p. 210). They have promulgated rules and regulations concerning the disposal of waste. These rules and regulations are designed to protect the environment and citizens of the respective developed nations (Tladi, 2000, p. 210). The industries have to respect these rules and pay the high cost rates for the disposal of hazardous wastes. Thirdly, the disposer of wastes collects the wastes from the industries in the developed states for profitable disposal (Tladi, 2000, p. 210). As they need to make profits in their activities, they have to find a cheap place for the disposal of hazardous wastes without strict regulations.

The disposer, therefore, uses Africa as a dumping ground for the waste (Tladi, 2000, p. 211). African states lack an environmentally sound management of waste because they do not have stringent laws and regulations to protect the environment. They do not possess infrastructure, scientific or technical capabilities to manage waste in an environmentally sound manner. The disposers target uninformed individuals or government officials to accept such waste for financial gains (Tladi, 2000, p. 211). This is illustrated by the Koko and Khian Sea incidents that occurred in 1980s. The Koko incident transpired in Nigeria in 1987 (Olowu, 2007, p. 271). Toxic wastes were dumped in Koko due to an agreement between a Nigerian citizen and an Italian waste trader. The Nigerian man did not know the content of the substance when he made the contract with the disposal of hazardous wastes. The Nigerian government was unaware of this disposal on its territory. Shortly after the disposal, the toxic waste produced harmful effects. In 1988 local residents fell sick and the Nigerian government ordered the Italian government to take back the hazardous wastes (Tladi, 2000, p. 211; Glazewiski, 1993, p. 236; Van der Linde, 2002, p. 100). The Italian government removed the toxic wastes, but it could not find any country where they could be dumped. Finally, the wastes were returned to Italy where dock workers refused to unload the waste.

The *Khian Sea* incident occurred in 1986. A cargo vessel, *Khian Sea*, departed from Philadelphia loaded with toxic wastes. It was refused permission to unload the wastes in different countries. However, it was allowed to unload its cargo in Haiti where the government thought it was carrying fertilizer (Tladi, 2000, p. 211). Subsequently, they discovered that the cargo contained toxic waste and the permission to unload was revoked. The ship returned to the US where it was

refused permission to unload. They unsuccessfully tried to search for many countries to unload the hazardous wastes. After a long time, the ship was found in Singapore without waste and people believed that it was dumped at the sea (Tladi, 2000, p. 212). These two incidents have encouraged the international community to deal with the issue of transboundary movement of hazardous wastes. Conferences were organized and conventions made in order to solve and regulate the problem of transboundary movement of hazardous wastes.

3. Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal (Basel Convention)

Due to growing concern regulating the problem of illegal transboundary movement of hazardous wastes, the United Nations initiated processes that led to the adoption of an international convention on hazardous waste (Akinnusi, 2001, p. 307). The Basel Convention regulates the transport and disposal of hazardous and other wastes and seeks to make such transport public record (Sands & Galizzi, 2004, p. 879; Basel Convention, 1989). The ultimate goal of the Basel Convention is to protect human health and the environment from the danger of such wastes, in application of the principle that wastes should be disposed of in the states where they were generated (Sands & Galizzi, 2004, p. 879). This principle encourages states to develop strategies and methods to dispose wastes in their territories. The Basel Convention is promised on the belief that by requiring the generator to carry out duties regarding transport and disposal of the wastes, the amount of wastes generated will be reduced (Sands & Galizzi, 2004, p. 879). The Basel Convention restates the right of every state to ban entry or disposal of foreign hazardous waste in its territory (Basel Convention, 1989; Sands & Galizzi, 2004, p. 879). This provision assists the state to regulate the ban of transboundary hazardous wastes on municipal level.

Any wastes transported or disposed of in contravention of the Basel Convention is considered illegal traffic in waste and is to be made a criminal offence (Basel Convention, 1989; Sands & Galizzi, 2004, p. 880). The threat of criminal sanction will deter individuals, companies or states to commit illegal traffic in wastes. Movement of wastes is only permitted if the generating state does not have the technical capacity or suitable sites for disposal or if the importing states require the wastes as raw material for recycling or recovery industries (Basel Convention,

1989; Sands & Galizzi, 2004, p. 880; Tladi, 2000, p. 204). The disposal of wastes is accepted in another country only on strict regulations.

Transboundary movement of hazardous wastes is only allowed if they are going to be disposed in an environmental sound manner in the state of import. This condition must be strictly respected in all the circumstances. Before any transboundary movement is permissible, the state of export must notify the state of import and all states of transit must respond in writing consenting to shipment (Basel Convention, 1989). States need to collaborate in this matter. All shipment must be carried as required by the states of import and transit (Basel Convention, 1989; Sands & Galizzi, 2004, p. 880). If a shipment cannot be completed as planned, the state of export has a duty to take back the wastes and ensure their proper disposal (Basel Convention, 1989). This places an obligation on the state of export to ensure that everything goes according to the plan and respect the law.

3.1. Obligations Imposed by the Basel Convention

The Basel Convention imposes specific obligations on member states (Lipman, 1999, p. 272). They ensure that the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes and their disposal are regulated in a sound manner that protects the environment and human lives. The states and multinational enterprises trading in wastes need to comply with laws, policies and regulations in their activities.

3.1.1. Minimization of Generation of Hazardous Wastes and the Proximity Principle

The Basel Convention requires parties to take appropriate measures to ensure the reduction of generation of wastes to a minimum (Lipman, 1999, p. 272). They have to reduce the production of hazardous wastes they generate. The cooperation of the parties is necessary for the development and implementation of new environmentally sound low-waste technologies. Parties have also to improve the existing technologies in order to minimize the generation of hazardous wastes and achieve more effective management methods. States should ensure that they have adequate disposal facilities for the environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes, which should be located, to the extent possible, within the state of generation (Lipman, 1999, p. 272; Basel Convention, 1989). This is the proximity principle and needs to be respected. States should ensure that persons involved in the management of hazardous wastes take all necessary steps to prevent pollution from hazardous wastes, and where pollution occurs, take all reasonable steps to minimize the consequences thereof for the human health and the

environment (Basel Convention, 1989). Furthermore, the export state should restore the environment in its previous status whenever there is pollution from hazardous wastes.

3.1.2. Restriction on the Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes

Parties have to prohibit the export or import of hazardous waste to or from nonparties in order to ensure the protection of developing countries (Basel Convention, 1989). However, trade in hazardous waste is recognized among member states. The general principle is that wastes should be disposed where they are generated. An exception exists where the hazardous wastes in question are required as raw material for recycling in the state of import or where the state of export does not have technical capacity or facilities to dispose of the waste in environmentally sound manner (Lipman, 1999, p. 273; Basel Convention, 1989). For instance, a British company, Thor Chemicals, opened a branch in Cato Ridge, KwaZulu-Natal to recycle mercury waste from Britain. It did not perform its functions appropriately and Cato Ridge was polluted. As a result, two workers died of mercury poisoning and the third one became mentally and physically disabled (Naunde, 2002, p. 26). There is an obligation on states to prevent the import of hazardous wastes if there is reason to believe that wastes will not be managed in an environmentally sound manner (Basel Convention, 1989). This places a duty on developed states to ensure that hazardous wastes are appropriately disposed in developing states.

3.1.3. Environmentally Sound Management of Hazardous Wastes

"Environmentally sound management of hazardous wastes" means "taking all practicable steps to ensure that hazardous wastes are managed in a manner which will protect human health and the environment against the adverse effects which may result from such wastes" (Basel Convention, 1989). Each state party has a responsibility to ensure that the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes is reduced to the minimum consistent with its environmentally sound management (Lipman, 1999, 274; Basel Convention, 1989). The exporting state has a responsibility to ensure that the country to which waste is shipped has capacity to manage the waste in an environmentally sound manner (Basel Convention, 1989). The exported hazardous waste must be re-imported if it cannot be disposed of in importing country in an environmentally sound manner (Basel Convention, 1989). There is an obligation on the exporting state to ensure that hazardous wastes are disposed in environmentally sound manner in importing state. The cooperation and

collaboration between states are necessary. Any transboundary movement of hazardous wastes must be covered by insurance, bond and other guarantee as required by the state of import or any state of transit which is a party (Lipman, 1999, 274; Basel Convention, 1989). The insurance covers any accident that may arise and is necessary to compensate damages that may occur.

3.1.4. Responsibility to Obtain Consent for Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes

The Basel Convention requires that the country of export obtains the written consent of the importing country and each state of transit before shipment (Lipman, 1999, p. 275; Basel Convention, 1989). States have responsibility to prohibit nationals from exporting or transporting hazardous wastes without authorization. Criminal sanctions may be imposed on illegal traffickers in hazardous wastes (Basel Convention, 1989). They have to be severe enough in order to correct and deter illegal traffickers from doing illegal trade in wastes. The individuals responsible for hazardous wastes mismanagement make a lot of money and can easily pay compensation for damages (Tladi, 2000, p. 212). So, paying compensations does not deter illegal traffic in wastes. They also have to forfeit the benefits received from the illegal traffics in hazardous wastes.

3.2. Criticisms of the Basel Convention

There are criticisms on the Basel convention on various issues. The convention seeks to regulate, but not to prohibit, the trade in hazardous waste between countries with the aim of making the movement of hazardous waste so costly that industries would find it more profitable to cut down on waste production (Akinnusi, 2001, p. 308). The developing states, especially African states, wanted a prohibition on transboundary movement of hazardous wastes. The developed states needed only the regulation of transboundary movement of hazardous wastes. The African states felt that their concerns were not considered. The Organization of African Unity (OAU) "was still gravely concerned about the lack of total ban on the export and import of hazardous waste" (Akinnusi, 2001, p. 308). During the adoption ceremony of the Basel Convention, the president of Mali and then AOU chair stated that the African states were not going to sign the convention because it was too weak and that the OAU would have to undertake further discussions (Akinnusi, 2001, p. 308). OAU felt that Basel Convention provisions did not go too far with regard to waste management control mechanisms. It also thought that any control provided by the Basel Convention could be circumvented because of the

lack of competent administrators and administrative agencies. For instance, the administrators may be involved in bribery and allow transboundary movement of hazardous wastes on their territories.

Developing states were also concerned that failure to ban recyclable hazardous waste would result in fake recycling schemes in which recycling was viewed as a mere label for exports that would otherwise be prohibited under the Basel Convention (Akinnusi, 2001, p. 308). African states that need money may honestly accept hazardous waste falsely labelled as recyclable even if the material inside the container was banned by the Basel Convention. The other concern of African states was the economy. The motivation for exporting hazardous waste to developing countries is primarily economic (Lipman, 1999, p. 269). Trade in wastes attracts lucrative monetary contracts in exchange for dumping toxic solid waste in waters and on soil (Naude, 2002, p. 26). As industrialized countries have become aware of the dangers of unsound disposal of hazardous wastes, they have introduced more stringent environmental and safety measures (Lipman, 1999, p. 269). For this reason, disposal of hazardous wastes has become extremely costly. The multinational corporations may shift to operate from developed states to developing states in order to dispose transboundary hazardous wastes in the cost effective manner.

Developing countries provide a disposal option at price that is often a mere fraction of the equivalent cost in the state of origin (Lipman, 1999, pp. 269 - 270). For instance, "late in 1980's the average disposal costs for one ton of hazardous wastes in Africa ranged between US \$ 2.50 - US \$ 50, while costs in industrialized countries ranged from US \$ 100 - US \$ 2000" (Lipman, 1999, p. 270). The low cost generally reflects the lack of environmental standards, less stringent law and absence of public opposition due to lack of information concerning the dangers involved (Lipman, 1999, p. 270). On 19 July 1990, the African states came together and adopted a more stringent regional convention with a broader scope than the Basel Convention. This convention prohibits the import of the hazardous wastes into Africa but permits the control and management of such wastes within Africa.

4. Convention on the Ban of Import into Africa and the Control of Transboundary Movements and Management of Hazardous Wastes within Africa (Bamako Convention)

The Bamako Convention prohibits the importation of waste from non-African countries into Africa (Akinnusi, 2001, p. 308; Bamako Convention, 1991). The ban on importation of hazardous waste is absolute and any violation of it is considered a criminal act (Sands & Galizzi, 2004, p. 936; Bamako Convention, 1991; Olowu, 2007, p. 270). Africa was concerned with the dumping of transboundary hazardous waste on its territory and there was a quest for the total prohibition. Concern among African states led to a resolution by the Organisation of African Unity declaring the dumping of nuclear and hazardous wastes into Africa to be a crime against Africa and African people (Lipman, 1999, p. 267; Van der Linde, 2002, p. 102). This demonstrates the grievances of the African states as they discovered in 1988 that "several companies in the developed world had been importing substantial quantities of toxic industrial waste to Africa" (Salgado, 2013, p. 20). They needed a perfect solution to the total ban of import of hazardous wastes in Africa.

The Bamako Convention brought an answer to the African states' concern by choosing total ban on dumping of hazardous wastes into Africa. However, it allows trade between African states and export of such waste from Africa (Akinnusi, 2001, p. 309). It is important to note that waste import within the African continent, that is to say intra-African import, is not prohibited (Tladi, 2000, p. 220; Van der Linde, 2002, p. 108). However it is regulated in the same way global movement of hazardous waste is regulated by the Basel Convention. For instance, states parties may not allow export of wastes to a state if the relevant state has prohibited such import. If the importing state has reason to believe that the waste will not be managed in an environmentally sound manner, the export will not be allowed (Bamako Convention, 1991). This provision ensures the protection of environment and human beings as well as biodiversity.

Furthermore, the Bamako Convention provides that intra-Africa transboundary movement of wastes may only occur if the state of export does not have the technical capacity and necessary facilities to dispose of waste in environmentally sound manner (Tladi, 2000, p. 221; Naldi 2000, p. 226; Bamako Convention, 1991). Article 8 provides that if the transboundary movement cannot be completed in accordance with the term of the contract, then the state of the export is obliged to

ensure that the wastes in question are taken back to the state of export by the exporter (Tladi, 2000, p. 221; Naldi, 2000, p. 229). This is in respect with the principle of cradle to the grave. The generator of waste is responsible until its final disposition.

4.1 Shortcoming of the Bamako Convention

There are shortcomings to the Bamako Convention for its success. They may affect its enforceability or deter the achievement of its objectives. Firstly the requirement of clean technologies may not be possible in many African states simply because they cannot afford new highly specialized and expensive technologies (Akinnusi, 2001, p. 315). This means that the cost of doing business in Africa would definitely increase and where it occurs there will be less incentive for corporations to do business in Africa. The result is the reduction of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and a loss of infrastructure.

Secondly it has been suggested that the total ban on importation of hazardous waste from other states might "endanger ill will from nations who are capable of managing such wastes" (Akinnusi, 2001, p. 315). It overlooks the importance that recycling and reclamation will play in emerging environmental world order. It may also limit the development of Africa's industries to uses of traditional raw materials and thereby increasing raw material costs (Akinnusi, 2001, p. 315).

Finally, the Bamako Convention's provision on the regulation of illegal traffic could also create problems (Akinnusi, 2001, p. 315). The convention requires that parties who export wastes illegally should ensure that the wastes are returned and makes no provision for situations where re-importation is impossible or where it would be less expensive to dispose of such waste in an environmentally sound manner in the state of import (Akinnusi, 2001, p. 315). The convention makes no provision where fault for illegal traffic cannot be ascertained. The total ban on imported waste may hamper the development of African industry (Naldi, 2000, pp. 231 - 232). Multinational corporations may direct their operations in other developing states outside of Africa. This can prevent development in Africa due to lack of foreign investments.

4.2. Implementation and Enforcement

International, regional and national regulations of transboundary movements of hazardous wastes would be ineffective in the absence of effective control and implementation mechanisms (Naldi, 2000, p. 232). Two organs have been

established under the Bamako Convention to this end: the conference of the parties and the secretariat (Naldi, 2000, p. 232). The conference ensures the effective implementation of the convention. The secretariat performs administrative functions such as acting as a repository of information and assisting in the identification of cases for illegal traffic. There are provisions for civil and criminal liabilities. For their part, member states must establish competent authorities, including a dump watch to coordinate with governmental and non-governmental organizations (Naldi, 2000, p. 232; Bamako Convention, 1991). The success of dump watch will prevent the illegal dumping of hazardous wastes and promote the environment as well as the lives of the people in each state.

Currently, the primary responsibility for the enforcement for international environmental law still lies with the national governments (Naldi, 2000, p. 233). Basel and Bamako conventions make the illicit traffic in toxic substances a criminal offence. The imposition of criminal offence has a great impact on waste traffickers because compensation for damages caused alone will not deter transgressors. In fact they make lots of monies in hazardous waste disposals. The people responsible for hazardous waste mismanagement acquire benefits from the waste trade and paying compensation for damage caused will not deter breaches of convention and mismanagement of wastes (Tladi, 2000, p. 212). It is proposed that states should therefore introduce penal, in addition to civil, sanctions in order to prosecute and punish unlawful traffic offenders where they have not done so (Naldi, 2000, p. 233). Body corporates must also have civil and criminal liabilities if they infringe laws or regulations related to waste disposals.

Many African states have enacted constitutional provisions and other laws to protect the environment. The African states that have constitutional rights to environment are Burkina Faso, Congo, Benin, Niger, and South Africa and so on (Naldi, 2000, pp. 233 - 234). Other African states have enacted legislation with regard to environment. They include Cote d'Ivoire, Egypt, Zambia, Zambia, Nigeria, Sudan, Togo, Seychelles, Tunisia and Cameroon (Naldi, 2000, p. 234). Cameroon took a drastic step of making the traffic in dangerous wastes punishable by death (Naldi, 2000, p. 234). South Africa has enacted statutes dealing with the environment such as National Environment Management Act 107 of 1998, Biodiversity Act 10 of 2004, National Water Act 36 of 1998 and Air Quality Act 39 of 2004.

5. Conclusion

Transboundary movement of hazardous wastes causes a significant challenge to the international community and creates conflict between developing states and developed states. Transboundary hazardous wastes are produced in developed states and they need a place where they can dispose them in a cost-effective way. Developed states have strict laws and environmentally sound management system concerning hazardous wastes in order to protect the citizens and environment. As a result, it has become extremely costly to dispose hazardous wastes in developed nations. Multinational corporations make trade in transboundary hazardous wastes. Africa is seen as a dumping ground for transboundary hazardous wastes. This is because African states do not have stringent laws and policies regarding the environment. They are also desperate of capital and can accept to take any money to allow hazardous wastes to be disposed in their territories.

Basel Convention regulates the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes. Developing states needed a total ban on the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes. African states were aggrieved as Basel Convention did not prohibit the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes coming outside Africa. In Bamako convention, they agree to ban the import of hazardous wastes into Africa. However it recognizes the transnational movement of hazardous wastes within Africa. They believe this system would be effective because some African administrators or authorities are incompetent or corrupt. They may facilitate the disposal of hazardous wastes on their territories in exchange of capital. As a result, a mere regulation of transboundary movement of hazardous wastes would not be effective.

Some African states have enacted constitutional provisions that deal with the environment in their legislation. Other African states have statutes governing the environment. They impose civil and criminal liabilities on traffickers in waste trade. Cameroon imposes a death penalty for traffickers in illegal waste trade.

Countries produce waste as they perform different activities to develop the economy. It is recommended that each state needs to dispose its hazardous wastes in an environmentally sound manner even if it more costly to do so. As a general rule, hazardous wastes must be disposed in the states where they have been generated. There should be a total ban on the transboundary movement of hazardous wastes especially from the developed states to developing states.

It is also recommended that whenever there is waste trade, the exporting state has to ensure the transfer of necessary technology to the importing state to dispose the 132

wastes in a way that that protects the environment, biodiversity and people's lives. The safe disposal of hazardous waste needs to be a priority in all the circumstances to protect the environment.

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