



POPS INC-1 HIGHLIGHTS MONDAY, 29 JUNE 1998

The first day of the first session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-1) for an International Legally Binding Instrument for Implementing International Action on Certain Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) began with opening statements, election of the Bureau, adoption of the agenda and rules of procedure, discussion of the organization of work and presentation of country positions.

PLENARY

OPENING OF THE MEETING: Dr. Klaus Töpfer, Executive Director of UNEP, opened INC-1 at 10:25 am and called for urgent international action on POPs, less generation of hazardous waste, and movement toward cleaner production and a lifecycle economy. He noted that citizens and action groups have been instrumental in raising awareness about the risks of toxic chemicals, highlighted the important work that organizations such as UNEP, the IOMC, IPCS, and IFCS have done in this area, and stressed the importance of funding these activities and the POPs negotiations.

Mr. Jacques Yves Therrien, Sous-ministre de la Metropole, Quebec, highlighted the increasing evidence of POPs in northern areas of Quebec and said that Quebec had carried out some of the early research into this issue. He stressed that the global dimension of the POPs problem requires international cooperation.

Ms. Christine Stewart, Minister of the Environment, Canada, noted that in northern Canada people often consume food with POP levels up to eight times higher than in southern Canada, which can particularly affect women and children. She recalled the recently completed Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP) POPs protocol, the first multinational legally binding agreement on POPs, and emphasized the need for concerted global action. She also challenged delegates to consider those most affected by these substances.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS: Dr. Töpfer asked for nominations for the Bureau of the INC. After regional consultations, Mr. John Buccini (Canada) was elected Chair of the INC and the following delegates were elected Vice-Chairs: Mr. Mohammed Asrarul Haque (India); Ms. Maria Cristina Cardenas Fischer (Colombia); and Mr. Ephraim Buti Nathembula (South Africa). Ms. Darka Hamel (Croatia) was elected rapporteur. Chair Buccini thanked delegates, expressed his commitment to act with honor and responsibility, and highlighted the challenges through 2000, the target date for comple-

tion of the negotiations.

Jim Willis, UNEP Chemicals, reminded delegates of the INC's mandate and highlighted provisions of UNEP Governing Council Decision 19/13C and their usefulness for lending structure and guidance to the negotiations. The Agenda and Rules of Procedure were also adopted.

PRESENTATION OF COUNTRY POSITIONS: Many delegates expressed their appreciation to UNEP and the INC Secretariat as well as the government of Canada for hosting the first session. The UK, on behalf of the EC, said that the LRTAP POPs protocol could aid the INC in the development of a global agreement on POPs. The EC said the INC should initially focus on the 12 POPs identified in the mandate, with a view to later expanding the list for consideration by the expert group on criteria to include the four additional POPs in the LRTAP POPs protocol and two additional substances highlighted in the Ministerial Declaration to the "Environment for Europe" Ministerial Conference. The EC also stressed the need to avoid overlap with other multilateral environmental agreements, in particular the Basel and PIC Conventions.

JAPAN called for, *inter alia*: cooperation among all stakeholders in addressing POPs; a transparent negotiating process; the identification of other substances and criteria for their regulation on a strictly scientific basis, as well as the establishment of an expert group for this purpose; and consideration of other international agreements related to POPs in negotiating the POPs convention. INDONESIA noted that his country had banned all 12 POPs and called for greater cooperation between developed and developing countries, particularly concerning capacity building, to reduce the use of POPs.

AUSTRALIA said that in developing a POPs convention, increased consideration should be given to the experiences of countries in the southern hemisphere. AUSTRALIA noted that although it has banned use of most of the 12 POPs under consideration, it continues to use small quantities of mirex until a suitable alternative is developed, illustrating the need to consider varying national conditions in the development of criteria. AUSTRALIA also called for, *inter alia*: increased information sharing, rather than financial assistance, in ensuring countries' safer chemical management; confining negotiations to the current mandate of 12 POPs, increasing the list only after these have been adequately addressed; and the establishment of an expert group on criteria.

NORWAY said knowledge of the negative effects of POPs is far from complete and that their ability to act as endocrine disrupters is



particularly alarming. He called for ceasing trade of POPs and safe destruction where production and use have been banned. He stressed a precautionary approach in the use of criteria for consideration of future POPs, the importance of mechanisms for supporting developing countries and consideration of the relationship of POPs to the work of the GEF.

THAILAND recognized, *inter alia*, the importance of socio-economic criteria in considering additional POPs, and encouraged industrialized countries to assist developing countries to initiate POPs activities. The CZECH REPUBLIC stressed the importance of POPs even to countries that have banned them because of their long-range transport characteristics. He reiterated the important task of safe disposal of contaminated stockpiles and the prevention of further POPs emissions even where POPs are already banned.

The REPUBLIC OF KOREA highlighted the success of the Montreal Protocol based on its successful provision of technical and financial support to developing countries and proposed it as a model for POPs. The COTE D'IVOIRE noted that his government has developed a PCB pilot project within the framework of the Basel Convention and stressed the importance of addressing at the outset the concerns of developing countries that lack resources to manage the products to be banned.

CHILE noted the absence of many developing countries and hoped more would participate as the process moves forward. He proposed the establishment of a network of certified regional satellite labs connected to a central lab that would provide technical assistance. He also stressed viable alternatives, risk profiles based on scientific evidence to determine inclusion or exclusion, and compatibility with other internationally binding agreements, particularly Agenda 21 and the WTO.

POLAND called for adopting measures to control international trade of POPs and, supported by PAKISTAN, a strong article regarding financial mechanisms. BRAZIL, supported by ARGENTINA and the PHILIPPINES, said the proposed working group should be opened. BRAZIL also stressed clearly defined terms of reference for the working group and its provision of technical assistance to developing countries. He also called for the inclusion of financial mechanisms for developing countries to implement the convention.

PAKISTAN said developed countries and multinational corporations should assist with POPs destruction in developing countries as they contributed to their existence in the first place. ICELAND stressed, *inter alia*: its dependence on fisheries; the global nature of POPs and the importance of eliminating dangers of increased POPs levels; adoption of a precautionary principle and flexibility in order to adjust to scientific developments; and the importance of NGO participation in the negotiations.

The DOMINICAN REPUBLIC stressed appropriate financial mechanisms for developing countries. TUNISIA proposed that producers of POPs be forced to withdraw all current unused stockpiles in countries maintaining those stockpiles. NEW ZEALAND said it was premature to give active consideration to adding new POPs to the current list while the negotiations are ongoing. He further noted the LRTAP POPs protocol was a positive development but emphasized that countries in the southern hemisphere may have different situations.

BURKINA FASO noted that as a developing and agricultural country, it is a major importer and consumer of various pesticides and chemicals, but that it lacks the infrastructure and ability to ensure rational management of these substances.

The INTERGOVERNMENTAL FORUM ON CHEMICAL SAFETY (IFCS) recalled the establishment of the Ad Hoc Working Group on POPs in 1995 and outlined how the work of the group is relevant to this negotiation. He further noted that this Working Group had now ceased to exist with the commencement of this INC and thanked the members of the Group for their hard work.

The INTERNATIONAL POPs ELIMINATION NETWORK (IPEN) advocated a comprehensive and sustained programme of action to eliminate these POPs rather than a risk management framework convention. He also stressed identification of cost-effective alternatives to POPs, including non-chemical alternatives, and shared responsibility for aid and capacity enhancement.

The PHILIPPINES said a draft convention should incorporate measures for capacity building and technological assistance. CANADA supported strong international action focused on land, marine and air-based POPs pollution with special consideration given to developing countries and countries with economies in transition. He suggested the INC consider criteria for identifying other POPs for regulation based on sound science and that the 2000 deadline is an important and achievable goal. MEXICO emphasized that the INC focus on the 12 initial POPs and then look at scientific criteria to consider other POPs. Since developed countries will likely play a larger role in the development of criteria for additional POPs, he stressed that consideration be given to the capacities of all countries. He also called for a search for cost-effective alternatives in partnership with industries and NGOs. PERU highlighted the need for international cooperation and assistance in order to develop alternatives. SOUTH AFRICA stated its commitment to the sound management of POPs, but suggested that the LRTAP POPs protocol was not a basis for an international convention as it does not recognize the special situation of developing countries. He stressed socioeconomic factors such as possible impacts on food production and human health and limiting the negotiations to the 12 POPs.

The UNITED NATIONS ECONOMIC COMMISSION FOR EUROPE (UNECE) said the LRTAP POPs protocol would be valuable for the ECE region as well as other regions. He also highlighted the work of the World Health Organization on monitoring trans-boundary fluxes of POPs.

The INUIT CIRCUMPOLAR CONFERENCE (ICC) said they perceive POPs as more of a public health than an environmental issue. She highlighted the value they place on their land and the food that is gathered on this land. She stressed the bioaccumulation of POPs in the arctic food chain, including in whales, seals and polar bears, and their subsequent passage from one generation to the next. She stressed the need for a comprehensive, rigorous and verifiable treaty on POPs.

IN THE CORRIDORS

Environmental NGOs exhibited undisguised zeal over the beginning of the negotiations as they relished its potential to advance the chemicals agenda in a progressive way. According to at least one NGO participant, this optimism was based on the fact that many governments seemed to be serious about taking strong international action.

THINGS TO LOOK FOR TODAY

The Plenary will convene at 10:00 am to continue with country statements. Delegates may also discuss the establishment of an expert group on scientific criteria for POPs.

Also at 10:00 am, the World Wildlife Fund will release a report concerning global DDT use at the Versailles Room in the Radisson Hotel.