



POPS COP-1 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 2 MAY 2005

The first Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs COP-1) opened Monday morning, 2 May, in Punta del Este, Uruguay. During morning and afternoon Plenary sessions, delegates addressed organizational matters and considered agenda items on the rules of procedure and budget. Delegates also convened in a Committee of the Whole (COW) session, and in a contact group on the POPs Review Committee (POPRC).

OPENING PLENARY

John Buccini, Acting Executive Secretary for the Secretariat of the Stockholm Convention, welcomed delegates to COP-1. Reinaldo Gargano, Uruguay's Minister of Foreign Affairs, highlighted Uruguay's efforts to address POPs under the Stockholm Convention, and stressed the importance of implementation.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: Delegates elected Mariano Arana, Uruguay's Minister of Housing, Territorial Planning, and Environment, as President of COP-1. On Monday afternoon, delegates elected representatives from the Netherlands, New Zealand, Nigeria, Senegal, Oman, the Philippines, Belarus, Macedonia, Uruguay and Barbados as Bureau members.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA: CANADA proposed that an agenda item on cooperation between the World Trade Organization and the Stockholm Convention be added under "Other Matters." Delegates adopted the agenda (UNEP/POPS/COP.1/1), as amended by Canada.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK: Delegates agreed to create a Committee of the Whole (COW), chaired by Mark Hyman (Australia), with a mandate to address substantive agenda items for consideration by the COP.

President Arana proposed establishing a working group to address legal, financial and other outstanding organizational matters. The UK, on behalf of the EUROPEAN UNION (EU), suggested also looking at previously presented proposals on financial rules, even though they are not currently bracketed. Egypt, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, asked that the legal working group operate in the six UN languages. President Arana acknowledged the importance of this matter in making financial provisions for future meetings but said it was not possible to make those arrangements at the present meeting. Brazil, for the LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN GROUP (GRULAC),

proposed having two co-chairs for the working group, one each from a developed and a developing country, and Parties agreed. During the Plenary's afternoon session, NEW ZEALAND nominated Canada as the developed country co-chair. BRAZIL nominated Egypt as the developing country co-chair, while SENEGAL and NIGERIA noted that the African Group had not reached consensus on this nomination. The nomination of co-chairs was postponed pending consultation by the Group of 77 and China (G-77/China).

ADOPTION OF THE RULES OF PROCEDURE FOR THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES

Buccini introduced the draft rules of procedure for the COP and its subsidiary bodies (UNEP/POPS/COP.1/25). He highlighted issues still unresolved by the INC relating to Party notification of participation by observers, voting, and Bureau size. On Bureau size, GRULAC and the AFRICAN GROUP endorsed a 10-member Bureau, with two representatives from each region. The COP agreed and adopted the rule pertaining to Bureau size. On the rules of procedure, delegates agreed to apply the rules on a provisional basis, with the exception of issues identified as unresolved.

REPORT ON THE ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE

Buccini reported on the initiatives undertaken and results achieved by the INC. AUSTRALIA and CANADA asked that the Secretariat prepare a draft decision acknowledging the work done by the INC and recognizing the contributions of the Secretariat.

ACTIVITIES OF THE SECRETARIAT AND ADOPTION OF THE BUDGET

Buccini drew attention to documents on the 2006-2007 budget (UNEP/POPS/COP.1/2), possible arrangements for a joint head of the Rotterdam and Stockholm Convention Secretariats (UNEP/POPS/COP.1/INF.2), information on expenditures and contributions (UNEP/POPS/COP.1/INF.3), and a cost analysis of proposals forwarded by the INC (UNEP/POPS/COP.1/INF.4). He said the budget would need to support: effective functioning of the COP, its subsidiary bodies, and necessary intersessional work; activities to assist parties in implementing the Convention; further development and operation of the clearing-house mechanism; and other activities necessary to support implementation, including cooperation with other Secretariats. He suggested the Plenary give a mandate to the legal working group to further develop the draft budget under consideration.



Buccini reminded delegates that draft decisions introduced over the course of the week may have budgetary implications.

SWITZERLAND introduced a proposal submitted with Norway and France on elements for a draft decision on enhancing synergies between chemicals and wastes-related conventions (UNEP/POPS/COP.1/CRP.4). The proposal welcomes a joint head for the Stockholm and Rotterdam Convention Secretariats, and asks the Secretariat to prepare a study on how a common structure for the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Secretariats could be developed. The EU expressed support for a joint head of Secretariats. The FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION (FAO) noted the advanced stage of discussions between the UNEP Executive Director and the FAO Director General on arrangements for UNEP and FAO to jointly perform the function of the Rotterdam Convention Secretariat. Noting a joint head of Secretariats for the Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions may be possible for UNEP, he said further consideration was needed regarding its feasibility for FAO.

SECRETARIAT LOCATION: SWITZERLAND presented a proposal on a special voting procedure for the permanent location of the Secretariat (UNEP/POPS/COP.1/CRP.1), which follows the procedure applied in COP-1 to the Rotterdam Convention.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE PERSISTENT ORGANIC POLLUTANTS REVIEW COMMITTEE:

Fatoumata Ouane, Secretariat, presented the revised and annotated draft terms of reference of the POPRC (UNEP/POPS/COP.1/14), referred delegates to the comments received on these terms of reference (UNEP/POPS/COP.1/INF/15), and highlighted an overview of the regional distribution of countries under the UN and FAO (UNEP/POPS/COP.1/INF/16). She also introduced a review of existing approaches on conflict of interest procedures (UNEP/POPS/COP.1/23), noting that the Rotterdam Convention has the most comprehensive and compatible approach.

SWITZERLAND and JAPAN stressed the need for representation of different types of expertise. The AFRICAN GROUP called for a 35 member POPRC, with seven members from each of the five UN regions. SOUTH AFRICA emphasized the need for gender equity and, with CHINA, for the POPRC to function in the six UN languages. The EU, CHINA, NORWAY and NEW ZEALAND called for looking to the model of the Rotterdam Convention's Chemical Review Committee (CRC), in particular as relating to its size, geographic distribution, and rotating membership. NORWAY highlighted its nomination to list pentabromodiphenyl ether. Delegates agreed to create a contact group on the POPRC, to be chaired by Ibrahima Sow (Senegal).

DDT: Jacob Williams, World Health Organization (WHO), introduced documents on the DDT Register (UNEP/POPS/COP.1/3), evaluation of the continued need for DDT (UNEP/POPS/COP.1/4), and responses from governments on the DDT reporting format and questionnaire (UNEP/POPS/COP.1/INF.5). He noted that decisions were required on three main points: the DDT Register and notification form; reporting by Parties using DDT, including a questionnaire; and evaluation of the continued need for DDT.

The EU, SOUTH AFRICA, MEXICO, the PHILIPPINES, AUSTRALIA and KENYA supported adoption of: the DDT Register, the notification form, and the reporting questionnaire. AUSTRALIA, CHINA, the PHILIPPINES and TANZANIA called for simplifying the reporting questionnaire. SOUTH AFRICA urged implementation of the recommendations relevant

to continued use of DDT and, supported by TANZANIA, stressed the need for capacity building for data capture and monitoring for the three-year reporting cycle. CHINA called for consideration of capacity building and research on DDT alternatives. KENYA noted its success with a pilot project on three DDT alternatives. While accepting the continued need for the use of DDT in some developing countries, the EU stressed that the long-term aim of the Stockholm Convention is to eliminate its production and use and suggested that there be a review of the evaluation of the continued need for DDT at COP-2. MEXICO reported on the success of a multi-factorial approach for treating malaria without DDT. PAPUA NEW GUINEA and KENYA supported the recommendations of the evaluation of the continued need for DDT for disease vector control, with PAPUA NEW GUINEA stressing the importance of striking a balance between the harm caused by exposure to DDT and that caused by malaria. LEBANON supported the ultimate goal of a global ban on the import, export and use of DDT. VENEZUELA emphasized its small DDT reserves for experimental purposes. TOGO said it had banned the import of DDT but needed a special waiver to import the pesticide to face a recent malaria outbreak. YEMEN emphasized success achieved with alternatives, but stressed the difficulty of putting an immediate end to DDT use. BOTSWANA noted it stopped using DDT in 1998, but explained that it had requested a DDT exemption in case of a malaria outbreak. AUSTRALIA supported the use of the Convention's financial mechanism to engage in research into viable alternatives. Chair Hyman suggested, and delegates agreed, to request the Secretariat and the WHO to revise the draft decisions to reflect discussions, and to present a revised draft to the COW for consideration.

POPRC CONTACT GROUP

The POPRC contact group met during the afternoon and discussed the size and membership of the POPRC. While there was broad support for using the Rotterdam Convention's 31-member CRC as a model, some also proposed different sizes. Acknowledging the lengthy negotiations that led to resolution on the CRC, the contact group agreed to use the same size and geographic distribution as in the CRC. Participants also opted to follow the CRC on the rotation of experts. Noting that the POPRC would be a subsidiary body, several countries stressed the need to respect the Stockholm Convention's rules of procedure and conduct all POPRC proceedings in the six UN languages. Others disagreed, noting budgetary and efficiency implications but emphasized the need to make the POPRC's output available in all six UN languages. The contact group is expected to reconvene on Tuesday to continue its discussions and consider experts' range of expertise and participation by observers.

IN THE CORRIDORS

In sunny Punta del Este, COP-1 opened amidst widespread optimism shared by Parties, observers and NGOs alike. Participants were pleased with progress on the POPRC and DDT, and some were even seen alternating their gatherings in official meeting rooms with informal strolls along the beach. In an otherwise productive day, several delegates were surprised that a rather swift designation of ten Bureau members was followed by difficulty in reaching agreement on the G-77/China's co-chair to the legal working group. Yet, with coordination difficulties worked out before leaving for the evening's reception, and the G-77/China finally reaching agreement on a candidate in a special late afternoon session, many were hopeful that there would be smooth sailing ahead.