

## FIFTH MEETING OF THE CONFERENCE OF THE PARTIES TO THE STOCKHOLM CONVENTION: 25-29 APRIL 2011

The fifth Conference of the Parties (COP5) to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) begins today at the Geneva International Conference Centre, in Geneva, Switzerland.

COP5 will consider numerous issues including: adding endosulfan to Annex A of the Convention, as recommended by the Persistent Organic Pollutant Review Committee (POPRC); a report prepared by the Secretariat in cooperation with the World Health Organization on the reporting and reviewing requirements for the use of lindane as a human health pharmaceutical for the control of head lice and scabies; the endorsement of nominated Stockholm Convention regional centres; and the terms of reference for the assessment of funding needs for parties that are developing countries or countries with economies in transition to implement the Convention over the period 2015–2019.

### A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE STOCKHOLM CONVENTION

During the 1960s and 1970s, the use of chemicals and pesticides in industry and agriculture increased dramatically. In particular, a category of chemicals known as POPs attracted international attention due to a growing body of scientific evidence indicating that exposure to very low doses of POPs can lead to cancer, damage to the central and peripheral nervous systems, diseases of the immune system, reproductive disorders and interference with normal infant and child development. POPs are chemical substances that persist in the environment, bioaccumulate in living organisms, and can have adverse effects on human health and the environment. With further evidence of the long-range transport of these substances to regions where they have never been used or produced, and the consequent threats they pose to the global environment, the international community called for urgent global action to reduce and eliminate their release into the environment.

In March 1995, the United Nations Environment Programme's Governing Council (UNEP GC) adopted Decision 18/32 inviting the Inter-Organization Programme on the Sound Management of Chemicals, the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) and the International Programme on Chemical Safety to initiate an assessment process regarding a list of 12 POPs. The IFCS *Ad Hoc* Working Group on POPs concluded that sufficient information existed to demonstrate

the need for international action to minimize risks from the 12 POPs, including a global legally-binding instrument. The meeting forwarded a recommendation to the UNEP GC and the World Health Assembly (WHA) that immediate international action be taken on these substances.

In February 1997, the UNEP GC adopted Decision 19/13C endorsing the conclusions and recommendations of the IFCS. The GC requested that UNEP, together with relevant international organizations, convene an intergovernmental negotiating committee (INC) with a mandate to develop, by the end of 2000, an international legally-binding instrument for implementing international action, beginning with the list of 12 POPs. In May 1997, the WHA endorsed the recommendations of the IFCS and requested that the World Health Organization participate actively in the negotiations.

**NEGOTIATION OF THE CONVENTION:** The Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee met five times between June 1998 and December 2000 to elaborate the convention. The Conference of the Plenipotentiaries convened from 22-23 May 2001, in Stockholm, Sweden, where delegates adopted: the Stockholm Convention; resolutions addressing interim financial arrangements and issues related to the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Waste and their Disposal; resolutions forwarded by the Preparatory Meeting; and the Final Act.

The Stockholm Convention as adopted in 2001 calls for international action on 12 POPs grouped into three categories: 1) pesticides: aldrin, chlordane, DDT, dieldrin, endrin, heptachlor, mirex and toxaphene; 2) industrial chemicals: hexachlorobenzene (HCB) and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs); and 3) unintentionally produced POPs: dioxins and furans. Governments are to promote best available techniques (BAT) and best environmental practices (BEP) for replacing existing POPs while preventing the development of new POPs. Provision was also made for a procedure to identify additional POPs and the criteria to be considered in doing so.

Key elements of the treaty include: the requirement that developed countries provide new and additional financial resources; measures to eliminate production and use of intentionally produced POPs, eliminate unintentionally produced POPs, where feasible, and manage and dispose of POPs wastes in an environmentally sound manner; and substitution involving the use of safer chemicals and processes to prevent unintentionally produced POPs. Precaution is exercised

throughout the Stockholm Convention, with specific references in the preamble, the objective and the provision on identifying new POPs.

The Stockholm Convention entered into force on 17 May 2004, and currently has 173 parties, including the European Community.

**COP1:** The first Conference of the Parties (COP1) to the Stockholm Convention was held from 2-6 May 2005, in Punta del Este, Uruguay. To set the Convention's implementation in motion, delegates adopted a broad range of decisions, which had been elaborated during two meetings of the INC in June 2002 and July 2003. These decisions related to: providing for the evaluation of the continued need for DDT use for disease vector control; establishing a review process for entries in the register of specific exemptions; adopting guidance for the financial mechanism; establishing a schedule for reporting; establishing arrangements for monitoring data on POPs; adopting rules of procedure and financial rules; adopting the budget for the Secretariat; and establishing the Persistent Organic Pollutant Review Committee (POPRC).

The POPRC was established to regularly consider additional candidates for the annexes to the Convention. The Committee's membership comprises 31 experts nominated by parties from the five regional groups. It reviews chemicals nominated by parties in three stages. The Committee first determines whether the substance fulfills POP screening criteria, as defined by the Convention in terms of its persistence, bioaccumulation, potential for long-range environmental transport (LRET), and toxicity. If a substance is deemed to fulfill these requirements, the Committee then drafts a risk profile to evaluate whether the substance is likely, as a result of its LRET, to lead to significant adverse human health and/or environmental effects and global action is therefore warranted. Finally, if the POPRC finds that global action is warranted, it develops a risk management evaluation reflecting socioeconomic considerations associated with possible control measures and, based on this, the POPRC decides to recommend that the COP list the substance under one or more of the annexes to the Convention.

**COP2:** This meeting took place from 1-5 May 2006, in Geneva, Switzerland. COP2 considered several reports on activities within the Convention's mandate, and adopted 18 decisions on, *inter alia*: DDT, exemptions, financial resources and mechanisms, information exchange, BAT/BEP, identification and quantification of releases, measures to reduce or eliminate releases from wastes, implementation plans, listing chemicals in Annexes A, B and/or C of the Convention, reporting, technical assistance, synergies, effectiveness evaluation, and non-compliance.

**COP3:** Stockholm Convention COP3 was held from 30 April - 4 May 2007, in Dakar, Senegal. COP3 considered several reports on activities within the Convention's mandate and adopted 22 decisions on, *inter alia*: a revised process for the review of entries in the register of specific exemptions; DDT; measures to reduce or eliminate releases from wastes; guidelines on the standardized toolkit for identification and quantification of releases; guidelines on BAT and draft guidance on BEP; regional centers; listing chemicals in Annexes A, B and/or C of the Convention; reporting; effectiveness evaluation; national implementation plans; budget; financial resources; technical assistance; synergies; and non-compliance.

**COP4:** COP4 was held from 4-8 May 2009 in Geneva, Switzerland. Parties adopted 33 decisions on a variety of topics, including financial resources and technical assistance and the agreement to list nine new substances under Annexes A, B, and/or C of the Convention, namely: c-pentabromodiphenyl ether; chlordecone; hexabromobiphenyl (HBB); alpha hexachlorocyclohexane (alphaHCH); betaHCH; lindane; c-octabromodiphenyl ether, pentachlorobenzene (PeCB) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), its salts and PFOS fluoride. The amendment to list additional POPs under Annexes A, B and/or C entered into force on 26 August 2010 for 151 parties. Parties also adopted a decision on cooperation and coordination among the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions, which included agreement to convene an extraordinary meetings of the Conference of the Parties.

#### INTERSESSIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

**POPRC5:** POPRC5 met from 12-16 October 2009, and addressed several operational issues, including: work programmes on new POPs; substitutions and alternatives; toxicological interactions; and activities undertaken for effective participation in the POPRC's work. POPRC5 agreed that hexabromocyclododecane (HBCD) met the Annex D criteria for listing and that a draft risk profile should be prepared. Draft risk profiles for endosulfan and short-chained chlorinated paraffins (SCCPs) were considered. SCCPs were kept in the Annex E phase for further consideration at POPRC6 and the Committee, through a vote, decided to move endosulfan to the Annex F phase, while inviting parties to submit additional information on adverse effects on human health.

**Ex-COP:** The simultaneous extraordinary Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions were held from 22-24 February 2010 in Bali, Indonesia. Delegates adopted an omnibus synergies decision on joint services, joint activities, synchronization of the budget cycles, joint audits, joint managerial functions, and review arrangements.

**FIFTH GEF REPLENISHMENT:** The sixth meeting of donors for the Fifth GEF Replenishment (GEF5), was held in Paris, France, on 12 May 2010, and agreed to a replenishment of US\$4.25 billion. A total of US\$420 million was allocated to chemicals projects from July 2010 – June 2014, including: US\$375 million for POPs; US\$25 million for ozone depleting substances; and US\$20 million for sound chemicals management including pilot projects on mercury. Under GEF-5 disposal of approximately 10,000 tonnes of obsolete pesticides, as well as 23,000 tonnes of PCB-related wastes may, is envisaged. Funding is also expected to be allocated to the reduction of unintentionally produced POPs, and in support pilot activities for new POPs.

**POPRC6:** This meeting took place from 11-15 October 2010 in Geneva, Switzerland. POPRC6 adopted 12 decisions, including on: support for effective participation in POPRC's work; the work programmes on new POPs; and intersessional work on toxic interactions. POPRC adopted the risk profile for HBCD and established an intersessional working group to prepare a draft risk management evaluation on HBCD. POPRC also agreed, by a vote, to adopt the risk management evaluation for endosulfan and recommend to COP listing endosulfan in Annex A, with exemptions. The Committee considered a revised draft risk profile on SCCPs, agreeing to convene an intersessional working group to revise the draft risk profile and to consider SCCPs again during POPRC7.