

POPS COP5 HIGHLIGHTS: MONDAY, 25 APRIL 2011

The fifth Conference of the Parties (COP5) to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) opened in Geneva, Switzerland on Monday, 25 April 2011.

In the morning, delegates heard opening statements and addressed organizational matters. During the afternoon delegates discussed national implementation plans (NIPs) and technical assistance.

OPENING PLENARY

Acting COP4 President Gholamhossein Dehghani (Iran) welcomed delegates and opened COP5. He underscored the achievements made in the 10 years since the adoption of the Stockholm Convention, but emphasized that more work is needed.

Jim Willis, Joint Executive Secretary of the Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions, emphasized that the Stockholm Convention has become the living dynamic instrument envisioned nearly 10 years ago. He underscored the importance of synergy among the chemicals conventions, noting that working together will allow the conventions to achieve more than would be possible independently.

Bakary Kante, on behalf of Achim Steiner, Executive Director of UNEP, lauded the synergy among the three chemicals conventions as constituting a "unique development" in the world of multilateral environmental agreements, and expressed hope that it would set a precedent for other processes.

Monique Barbut, Chief Executive Officer, Global Environment Facility (GEF), highlighted GEF's assistance to developing countries and countries with economies in transition in eliminating POPs. She announced that the GEF Council has approved US\$250,000 to assist parties in updating their NIPs to include new POPs. She informed delegates of efforts to improve the GEF investment model in response to requests by countries, stating that the GEF partnership is being expanded to include national and other entities, in preference to multilateral entities.

Paulina Lopez Fletes, youth representative and recipient of the Safe Planet Campaign film contest award, called for avoiding the adverse effects of POPs.

OPENING STATEMENTS: On behalf of GRULAC, Costa Rica reiterated the region's priorities, including financial and technical support, technology transfer, development of local and regional capacity, and training and awareness-raising.

Kenya, on behalf of the AFRICAN GROUP, emphasized the need for non-chemical alternatives to POPs, particularly DDT; expressed concern about reducing dioxin and furan emissions; and appealed for financial and technical assistance, technology transfer, local and regional capacity building, training, and awareness-raising.

INDIA underscored the need for strong scientific evidence and rigorous analysis of data, and said that new obligations should occur in tandem with provision of adequate financial resources.

The EU prioritized the listing of endosulfan, the work programme on new POPs, synergies, and the compliance mechanism as key issues for discussion at COP5, and expressed concern over the number of requests for financial assistance for various issues given the global financial crisis.

CHINA called for financial and technical assistance for developing countries as they strive to eliminate POPs. Noting the successful formulation of his country's NIP, NEPAL outlined his country's efforts to eliminate POPs, including banning DDT.

SWITZERLAND prioritized the listing of endosulfan based on the extensive work of the POPRC and noted the need to make every effort to reach agreement on all matters of substance by consensus, and to adopt decisions by general agreement.

ALGERIA noted her government's commitment to creating an enabling environment for the elimination of POPs and announced her country's interest in hosting a regional centre. Informing delegates of her country's accession to the three chemicals conventions, the RUSSIAN FEDERATION welcomed further cooperation on their implementation.

The INTERNATIONAL POPS ELIMINATION NETWORK (IPEN), PESTICIDE ACTION NETWORK (PAN) and the GLOBAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' CAUCUS called for listing endosulfan in Annex A, with no exemptions.

The GLOBAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES CAUCUS underscored that long range environmental transport is not an abstract concept for indigenous peoples, and called upon COP5 to establish an indigenous peoples working group on effective implementation.

ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

ELECTION OF OFFICERS: On this matter (UNEP/POPS/COP.5/2), noting rule 22 of the Rules of Procedure, the Secretariat introduced a proposal by the European Union (EU) (UNEP/POPS/COP.5/CRP.3) to elect the COP5 president, and to postpone the election of the nine vice presidents until after discussions on Rules of Procedure. Armenia, for Central and Eastern Europe, nominated Karel Blaha (Czech Republic) as COP5 President and parties agreed.

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA: Plenary adopted the agenda (UNEP/POPS/COP.5/1) without amendment.

ORGANIZATION OF WORK: The Secretariat introduced the tentative organization of work (UNEP/POPS/COP.5/1/Add.1, UNEP/POPS/COP.5/INF/1, and UNEP/POPS/COP.5/CRP.1). Noting the need for high-level political agreement on the establishment of a compliance mechanism, COP5 President Blaha suggested, and delegates agreed, to task Barry Reville (Australia) with facilitating informal consultations on the issue.

REPORT ON CREDENTIALS: COP5 President Blaha stressed the importance of submitting credentials within 24 hours of the meeting's opening.

RULES OF PROCEDURE

The Secretariat introduced a note on the Rules of Procedure (UNEP/POPS/COP.5/3) and reminded delegates of the need to address bracketed text under rule 45(1). COP5 President Blaha proposed removing the brackets, AUSTRALIA preferred retaining the brackets, and delegates agreed to consider the issue again at COP6.

The EU, supported by SWITZERLAND, introduced a proposal to amend rule 22 to change the timing of the election of COP Presidents (UNEP/POPS/COP.5/CRP.3). CHILE sought clarification on details of the proposal and parties agreed a drafting group would refine the text of the proposal.

PROGRAMME OF WORK AND ADOPTION OF THE BUDGET

The Secretariat introduced the activities undertaken by the Secretariat in 2009-2010 (UNEP/POPS/COP.5/33); the financial and staffing situation (UNEP/POPS/COP.5/34, and UNEP/POPS/COP.5/INF/33); and three budget scenarios to be considered for the biennium 2012-2013 (UNEP/POPS/COP.5/35, and 35/Add.1), namely the Executive Secretary's assessment of the required rate of growth (9.5%), zero nominal growth, and 10% nominal growth. Noting the global financial situation, the Secretariat emphasized that the zero nominal growth budget scenario could lead to reduction of activities.

SWITZERLAND stressed that activities addressing new POPs should be prioritized, and expressed disappointment with the current lack of financial support from other donors. He proposed that 50% of the Swiss contribution be reallocated into the Convention's voluntary trust fund which can be targeted towards Switzerland's host country contribution and joint activities in the context of the synergies process.

JAPAN supported the zero nominal growth scenario, and proposed that budget negotiations be completed by Wednesday evening to allow Japan to consult with its capital prior to the Japanese national holiday on Friday.

The EU questioned the dependence of the PCBs Elimination Network and Global Alliance for alternatives to DDT on Stockholm Convention accounts, and emphasized the need for greater strategic direction of the synergies process to improve efficiency.

ARGENTINA supported budgeting for activities on new chemicals, efficiency, and regional centers, and emphasized the need for new and adequate financial resources to enable developing countries to meet new commitments. MEXICO noted any budgetary increase should support activities on effective implementation, efficiency, and NIPs, and underscored that synergies should involve zero budgetary growth.

CHILE, with the EU and INDONESIA, stressed that discussions on synergies among the three conventions and the budget should not be held in parallel. President Blaha noted this request and clarified that the plenary will forward all agreed decisions with budgetary implications to a budget group. A budget contact group, to be co-chaired by Kerstin Stendahl (Finland), was established, with a second Co-Chair to be determined before the group's first meeting on Tuesday.

MATTERS RELATED TO THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CONVENTION

IMPLEMENTATION PLANS: The Secretariat introduced the issue (UNEP/POPS/COP.5/13, UNEP/POPS/COP.5/INF/7/Rev.1, INF/8 and INF/47), noting 27 parties have transmitted NIPs since May 2009, and revised NIPs to reflect the new POPs will be due in August 2012.

The EU emphasized the need for NIPs to be revised and updated by the deadline. NIGERIA underscored stakeholder involvement in updating NIPs. LEBANON and MOROCCO noted progress since submitting their NIPs. KENYA emphasized that while most African countries have submitted their NIPs, they need to be updated to address the nine new POPs.

MEXICO supported revising guidelines for updating NIPs. SWITZERLAND suggested that new guidance would be strengthened by inclusion of references to activities in other processes, and would reflect synergies on a technical level.

MOLDOVA questioned its eligibility for financial assistance as a party to the Convention that has not ratified the amendments to Annexes A, B, and C. On the issue of eligibility, the GEF explained that the GEF Council has adopted the guidance for

reviewing and updating NIPs, and the guidance indicates that only countries that are parties to the Convention are eligible for GEF funding.

COLOMBIA called for financial support and guidelines to enable compliance. VENEZUELA highlighted its efforts to reduce use of DDT, and emphasized that countries unable to comply should not be penalized.

NORWAY emphasized that guidance should focus on the core activities of the Convention, with the aims of developing further project proposals and facilitating synergies with the chemicals and waste fields.

Citing Article 10 of the Convention (public information, awareness and education), IPEN called for enhanced institutional mechanisms supporting civil society's participation in increasing transparency and accountability.

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: The Secretariat introduced the documents on the guidance on technical assistance and the activities of the regional and subregional centres (UNEP/POPS/COP.5/20 and 21), and the related information documents (UNEP/POPS/COP.5/INF/37-47). The EU invited parties and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to provide relevant information regarding experience and guidance on technical assistance. SWITZERLAND supported new regional centres being built within existing institutions, such as the Basel Conventions Regional Centres (BCRCs).

BOLIVIA, with IRAQ, MEXICO, and Morocco for the ARAB GROUP, called for technical and financial assistance to facilitate timely implementation of NIPs. BOLIVIA also called on the Secretariat to provide evidence of activities related to technology transfer as required under Article 12 (technical assistance). CHINA, with IRAN, stressed the need for technical assistance to be provided quickly. MEXICO lamented that the work of the regional centers has so far been insufficient, highlighting that no technical assistance activities for, among others, the environmentally-sound disposal of POPs, have been carried out in the GRULAC region. GABON highlighted the need for technical assistance to be aligned to national legislation. COLOMBIA called for the prioritization of technical assistance to developing country parties for the environmentally-sound management of POPs.

BANGLADESH and URUGUAY emphasized the need to strengthen the role of regional centers, with ARGENTINA underscoring the need for appropriate financial resources. NAMIBIA stressed regional centers should meet the interests of parties in the region. IRAN called on parties to endorse the nomination of Iran's BCRC. The EU emphasized the need to maintain a "reasonable number" of centers. JAPAN underscored the need to apply criteria, including the need for regional balance, in reviewing nominated centers.

Responding to questions on whether it had analyzed transfer of technology, and obstacles faced by parties in accessing such transfers, the Secretariat noted COP6 would have an opportunity to evaluate regional centers endorsed at COP4.

FINANCIAL RESOURCES: The Secretariat introduced the issue (UNEP/POPS/COP.5/22-27 and UNEP/POPS/COP.5/INF/18-22 and INF/48). The GEF SECRETARIAT introduced its report to COP5 (UNEP/POPS/COP.5/24), which, *inter alia*, outlines key reforms to the GEF. Kante reported on the consultative process on financing chemicals and wastes, scheduled to meet again in early May.

IN THE CORRIDORS

In the job just a week, the newly appointed Joint Executive Secretary of the Basel, Stockholm and Rotterdam Conventions, Jim Willis, hit the ground running. This new post marks a key step in the move to synergize the chemicals and waste conventions, and Willis is tasked with propelling the treaties forward as a repackaged and lean machine to address their mandates in an integrated, effective and efficient manner. Easier said than done? Probably, but also, according to most delegates, necessary. As COP5 opened, delegates heard disgruntled rumblings on the need for zero nominal growth, the as-yet unmet promises of cost-savings through synergies, and concerns over the free-riding of some donors, all pointing to the urgent need for the synergies promises to pay dividends. Recalling the key role Willis played in developing the Convention, many seemed assured he is equal to this imposing task.