



CANADIAN ENVIRONMENTAL LAW ASSOCIATION
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SOLUTIONS ARE IN OUR NATURE.



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THE STOCKHOLM CONVENTION

The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) is an international treaty designed to end the production and use of some of the world's most poisonous chemicals.

- ◆ All of the chemicals targeted for action in the Stockholm Convention are Chlorinated chemicals. Most of these chemicals have been used to kill insects and other pests. Others were used as industrial chemicals, or were produced as a by-product of industrial processes, including incineration. What they have in common is that they pose serious health risks to human populations and ecosystems. All POPs chemicals last for many years in the environment and can travel vast distances, transported by the air and water.
- ◆ The Convention targets twelve chemicals for action. They include PCBs, Dioxins and DDT.
- ◆ The Convention allows countries to continue using DDT for malaria control, if necessary.
- ◆ The Convention allows countries that are Parties to it to add more chemicals to the list of substances to be banned or restricted.
- ◆ The Convention was signed in 2001 after several years of negotiations between representatives of more than 120 countries. After fifty of those countries officially ratified the Convention, it came into force. Canada was the first country to ratify the Convention. France was the 50th. There are currently 59 Parties to the Convention.

Once the Convention comes into force, countries that belong to it are bound to take certain steps:

- ✓ End the production and use of some chemicals, and restrict the production and use of others.
- ✓ Clean up stockpiles of unwanted and out of date chemicals. Many of these chemicals are stored in unsafe conditions, and are poisoning the water, animals, and people.

- ✓ Develop a national implementation plan within two years that shows how the country will meet its obligations under the convention.
- ✓ Try to stop the production and use of new chemicals which show similar characteristics to other POPs .
- ✓ Promote the development of substitutes for POPs.
- ◆ The Convention recognizes that it will be too costly and difficult for some countries to clean up the chemicals on their own. It commits richer countries to helping out, with money, and with technical help.
- ◆ Donors have promised to contribute hundreds of millions of dollars. POPs projects - including projects initiated by NGOs - in more than 100 countries are already being supported.

The Next Phase – A Living Convention

The entry into force of the Stockholm Convention finishes one phase of work on dealing with Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), and signals the start of a new phase. The Convention does not just deal with the past, the twelve substances that it identified for action, but also with future potential threats of a similar nature. The Convention was designed to be able to respond to those new threats, and to find new and better ways of dealing with the old threats.

- ◆ Those countries which have ratified the Convention have the ability to make decisions at regular meetings called “Conference of the Parties”. The decisions they can make include:
 - ✓ Adding new POPs: The twelve pollutants chosen for action by the Stockholm Convention have a long record of harm to the environment and people’s health. They have already been banned in some countries. There are several other substances that did not make the list, but may prove to just as harmful. The Stockholm Convention allows countries that have ratified the Convention to propose adding new substances to the list of those targeted for ultimate elimination.
 - ✓ Defining best techniques and technologies: In trying to dispose of pollutants identified under the Convention, countries that have ratified are obliged to use the best methods and technologies. What those “best available techniques and best environmental practices” might be are not yet defined.
- ◆ There are some immediate obligations for countries that have ratified. Parties to the Convention have two years from the date that the Convention enters into force to develop an implementation plan on how to start getting rid of POPs.
- ◆ Under the implementation plan, each country must create an inventory outlining how much of each of the POPs identified it is currently releasing, and must review its laws

and policies to see if they are up to the task of meeting obligations to reduce and eliminate those POPs.

- ◆ Within two years of May 17th, each Party to the Convention must develop an action plan for POPs such as dioxins and furans, hexachlorobenzene and PCBs.
- ◆ Every five years, each country must report on the effectiveness of its plan.
- ◆ In many countries, non-government organizations, such as environmental groups, or health organizations helped persuade their governments to take part in the Stockholm Convention, and also helped to provide information on POPs to the people of the country. The Convention recognizes that contribution, and encourages countries to provide opportunities for public participation at the national level in providing input on the implementation of the Convention. In Canada, the participation of stakeholders including the Aboriginal community and NGOs has been very effective.
- ◆ Environmental and health organizations around the world are marking today with events in countries such as the Philippines, Ukraine, Brazil, and Tanzania.