

STATEMENT

Negotiations Lead to an International Agreement to reduce and eliminate Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)

OTTAWA - December 11, 2000 - Canada welcomes the draft final text, reached Sunday, December 10th in Johannesburg, South Africa, for a global agreement to reduce and eliminate some of the most dangerous toxic substances to human health and the environment. These substances are known as Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs).

Most POPs substances have been banned or restricted in Canada for years, but they are transported from foreign sources through the atmosphere into Canada, where they accumulate in the food chain and pose significant risks to the health of Canadians, particularly northern Aboriginal populations dependent on traditional foods. POPs affect humans through the food chain, and some may be passed on from mother to child across the placenta and through breast milk.

The substances which are subject to the provisions of the draft convention are known as the “dirty dozen” and fall into three broad categories:

- Pesticides - DDT, chlordane, toxaphene, mirex, aldrin, dieldrin, endrin, heptachlor
- Industrial chemicals - PCBs, hexachlorobenzene
- By-products and contaminants - dioxins and furans

The draft convention sets out control measures covering the production, import, export, disposal and use of POPs. It calls on the 122 countries involved in the final negotiations to promote the best available technologies and practices for replacing existing uses of POPs while preventing the development of new POPs. Countries are to draw up national implementation strategies and develop action plans for carrying out their commitments.

Canada has worked diligently to create an effective global POPs Convention. In March of 2000, Canada became the first country to make a specific funding commitment, \$20 million, for POPs capacity building in developing countries and countries with economies in transition. This funding will help those countries find alternatives to the use of POPs, such as DDT.

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Government of Canada actions to reduce and eliminate toxic substances are centered under the Toxic Substances Management Policy, regional action programs such as the Northern Contaminants Program and legislation, in particular, the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act*, the *Pest Control Products Act*, the *Fisheries Act* and the *Hazardous Products Act*.

Canadian leadership in developing this draft convention is recognized by the global community. Canadian Dr. John Buccini chaired the negotiations. The first negotiating session was held in Montreal in 1998 and Canadian science on the long range transport and the effects of POPs on humans and wildlife helped form the basis for the convention.

The final text of the POPs Convention will go forward for formal approval, signature and ratification in Stockholm, Sweden in May 2001. Canada is looking forward to adopting the agreement.

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