



a toxics-free future

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Toxic pesticide globally banned after unprecedented vote at UN meeting on chemicals

(Geneva, Switzerland) – Delegates from more than 90 countries took the unprecedented step of voting for a global ban on pentachlorophenol – a proven toxic pesticide and contaminant found in wildlife and human biomonitoring studies worldwide. The historic vote came at the combined meetings of the Basel, Rotterdam, and Stockholm Conventions – which usually make decisions by consensus – after India repeatedly blocked action.

During the meeting, India surprisingly rejected the findings of the Stockholm Convention’s own scientific expert committee in which they participated. Switzerland triggered the voting procedure – the first in the history of the convention. Ninety-four countries voted in favor of global prohibition of pentachlorophenol; two opposed; and eight countries abstained.

“We commend the global community for this important decision which will help ensure that the Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic and the traditional foods on which they depend are protected against toxic pentachlorophenol,” said Pamela Miller of Alaska Community Action on Toxics. The delegates of the Stockholm Convention also supported international bans on two other industrial chemicals that harm the global environment and human health: chlorinated naphthalenes and hexachlorobutadiene.

Delegates at the Rotterdam Convention failed to list two deadly substances, chrysotile asbestos and a paraquat formulation, despite the fact that exporters would simply have been required to notify and get permission from importing countries. Belarus, Cuba, India, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Pakistan, and Russia all opposed listing chrysotile asbestos. Guatemala, India, Indonesia, and Paraguay blocked listing of the paraquat formulation.

“All the candidate substances meet the Convention criteria according to the treaty’s own expert committee,” said Mariann Lloyd-Smith, IPEN Sr. Policy Advisor. “That means that a small handful of opposing countries and their powerful industry representatives undermined the treaty with a political decision that disrespects governments’ right to know what substances are



entering their borders. They simply put their own economic and trade interests before the health and well-being of the global environment and its inhabitants.”

The Basel Convention considered e-waste guidelines that would exempt equipment destined for repair from the treaty’s hazardous waste trade control procedures, a measure that would open the door to unscrupulous traders claiming all broken equipment as “repairable.” The Convention President pushed a decision to adopt this exemption after the meeting lost interpretation due to the late night hour. Latin American countries protested the procedure and conduct of the meeting.

“Developing countries struggling with e-waste would benefit from good Basel ewaste guidelines,” said Tadesse Amera, Pesticide Action Nexus, Ethiopia. “But they do not want loopholes that allow dumping under the excuse of repair. We needed stronger measures, not a weakened treaty.

The EU pushed dangerous clean-up standards of 1000 ppm for three toxic flame retardant chemicals widely used in building insulation, upholstery and electronics (HBCD, PentaBDE, and OctaBDE). In contrast, the waste clean-up limit for PCBs and other substances already listed in the treaty is 50 ppm – 20 times lower than the EU proposal. For the first time, delegates settled on two options for HBCD (100 ppm or 1000 ppm) and two options for PentaBDE and OctaBDE (50 ppm or 1000 ppm). Although the EU pushed a weak standard that undermines the Stockholm Convention, China and Iran pushed for the more protective standards (50 ppm and 100 ppm) that are more consistent with the serious threats posed by POPs.

[IPEN](http://www.ipen.org) is a global network of over 700 public interest organizations in 100 countries working to eliminate toxic substances. www.ipen.org @ToxicsFree <http://ipen.org/conferences/cop7>

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Additional resources:

Guide to Listing the 2015 POPs Candidates

<http://www.ipen.org/documents/guide-listing-2015-pops-candidates>

Toxic Toy or Toxic Waste: Old POPs in New Products

<http://ipen.org/documents/toxic-toy-or-toxic-waste-old-pops-new-products-summary-decision-makers>

Toxic Recycling: POPs in Recycled & New Products

http://ipen.org/sites/default/files/pictures/Toxic-recycling-POPs-in-new-and-recycled-products_0_0.jpg