



For Immediate Release

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Toxic chemicals in your living room Delegate Decisions Threaten the Integrity of the Stockholm Convention

(Geneva, Switzerland) Government delegates to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) made the historic decision to add nine new chemicals to its list of substances that governments must control. However, the control measures approved for three of these chemicals listed are disturbingly inadequate and are inconsistent with the Convention's objective, which is to protect human health and the environment.

The three substances include two brominated flame retardants (pentaBDE and octaBDE) used in furniture foams and in electrical office equipment. The third is perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS), a chemical used in manufacturing and consumer products.

The delegates agreed that these substances persist in the environment, travel long distances, and cause harm to human health and the environment. Children in all parts of the world are exposed to all three chemicals, which persist in their bodies.

All new production of both pentaBDE and octaBDE has recently stopped. Ongoing human exposure to these chemicals comes from the products and wastes in which they are still present. The meeting agreed to allow the continued recycling and reuse of products contaminated with these chemicals until 2030. In many cases, 10-20% of the composition of some plastic products and upholstery foams consists of these harmful chemicals.

“This will permit foam in furniture containing 18% pentaBDE to be chopped up, used as backing in new carpets, and returned to our homes where exposure will continue,” said Professor Katima of the University of Dar Es Salaam, who is also the Co-Chairman of the International POPs Elimination Network. “The provisions will also allow these highly contaminated products to be exported from wealthy countries to the developing world, Africa in particular,” he added.

The third listed chemical, PFOS, is so persistent that it has shown no degradation under any environmental condition tested. In one study of 299 infants in the United States, PFOS was found in the blood of 297 of them. After listing PFOS, delegates decided that its ongoing production and 15 or more uses will be allowed to continue, including uses of PFOS that disburse it directly into the environment, such as in fire fighting foams and pesticides.

The International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN) welcomes the decision of the Convention to list an additional nine POPs and will continue to promote the full and effective implementation of the Convention's provisions.

While IPEN is very disappointed that the agreed control measures for PFOS and the flame retardants are woefully inadequate, NGOs in the network will continue to press for improvements.

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For background information on the chemicals listed, see the *IPEN Guide to New POPs* at http://www.ipen.org/ipenweb/documents/ipen%20documents/newpopbooklet_09.pdf

The International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN) is a global public interest NGO network with more than 700 Participating Organizations in 100 countries in all regions. IPEN Participating Organizations in many countries and in all regions collaborated to advance the common goal of creating a strong and effective global POPs treaty. IPEN now works with NGOs at regional, national, district and community levels in support of POPs elimination efforts at a step toward a future world where toxic chemicals no longer cause harm to human health or to the environment. www.ipen.org