Toxics Link
for a toxics-free world

THE STOCKHOLM CONVENTION

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Frequently Asked Questions

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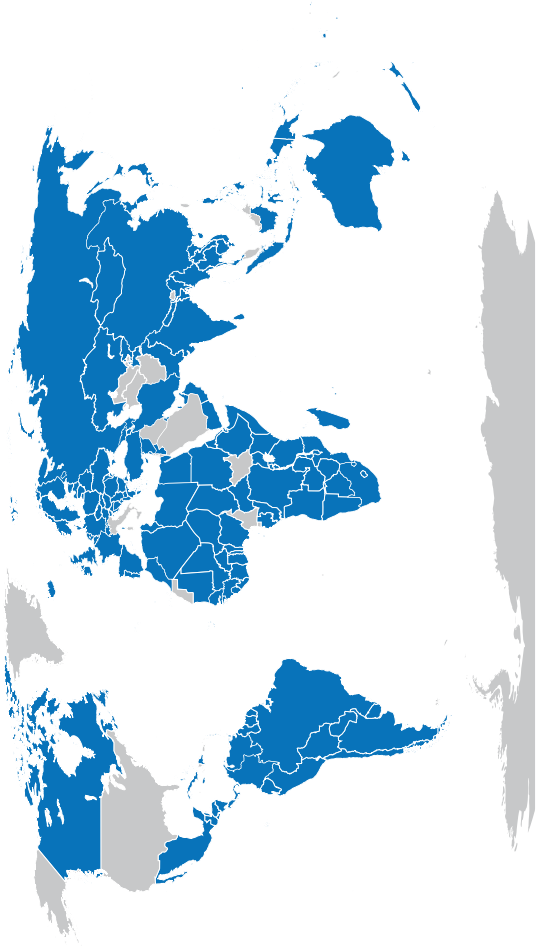


State parties to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
Source: wikipedia

Q 1. What is the Stockholm Convention?

The Stockholm Convention is a globally binding international treaty that aims to eliminate or restrict the production, use, storage and trade of Persistent Organic Pollutants (PoPs). The initiative for this was taken by the governing council of the United Nation Environmental Program (UNEP) in 1995 and the negotiations for the Convention were completed on 23rd May, 2001. The convention came into force on 17th May, 2004. India Ratifies the convention on 13th Jan 2006 and came into force on 12th April 2006.

Q 2. Importance of Stockholm Convention?

Due to the risks posed by the long-range transport of PoPs, the international community had been calling for global action to reduce and eliminate release of these chemicals. Therefore, Stockholm Convention is an important step towards minimizing risks from the impact of toxics persistent organic pollutants.

Link: http://chm.pops.int/Convention/tabid/54/Default.aspx

Q 3. What are Persistent Organic Pollutants (PoPs)?

Persistent Organic Pollutants are organic chemical substances that persist in the environment, bioaccumulates through the food web and pose a risk of causing adverse effects to human health and the environment. They are resistant to environmental degradation through chemical, biological, and photolytic processes. PoPs are among the most dangerous of all the pollutants released into the environment every year by us.

Q 4. Environmental and Health impact of POPs?

Scientists have found that exposure to PoPs can cause health problems like cancer and tumors; neurobehavioral impairment including learning disorders and changes in temperament; immune system changes; reproductive deficits and sex-related disorders. PoPs are well-known endocrine disruptor substances which can cause endocrine related disorder. Even small POPs concentrations have a genotoxic, immunotoxic and cancerous effects hence posing a real threat to health of the current and future generations. POPs concentration in human tissues and breast milk is of special concern. POPs gets accumulated in embryos through placenta and in babies through breast milk and has the potential to cause an irreversible damage to brain and reproductive organs of the baby.

Further, there are studies which have established link between POP exposure and abnormalities among various species of fish, birds and mammals. For example, in certain birds of prey, high levels of DDT caused eggshells to thin to the point that the eggs could not produce live offsprings.

Q 5. Which chemicals are considered PoPs in Stockholm Convention?

There are 22 Persistent Organic Pollutants (PoPs) listed in the Stockholm Convention.

Initially 12 PoPs, called as “Dirty Dozen”, were banned by the Stockholm convention. These are Aldrin, Chlordane, DDT, Dieldrin, Endrin, Heptachlor, Hexachlorobenzene, Mirex, Toxaphene, which are being used as pesticides. The hexachlorobenzene, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) are used for industrial chemicals. Further Hexachlorobenzene; polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins (dioxins) and polychlorinated dibenzofurans (PCDD/PCDF) (furans) and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs are released unintentionally as the byproducts.

In 2009, nine new PoPs, chlordecone, alpha hexachlorocyclohexane, beta hexachlorocyclohexane, lindane, pentachlorobenzene used as pesticides were listed as PoPs. Industrial chemicals such as hexabromobiphenyl, hexabromodiphenyl ether and heptabromodiphenyl ether, pentachlorobenzene, perfluorooctane sulfonic acid, its salts and perfluorooctane sulfonyl fluoride, tetrabromodiphenyl ether and pentabromodiphenyl ether

are also listed as PoPs. Alpha hexachlorocyclohexane, beta hexachlorocyclohexane and pentachlorobenzeneare are by-products.

In 2011, Endosulphan, widely used as a pesticide in India, was listed as PoPs in the Convention.

Q 6. How PoPs are being listed in Stockholm convention?

The chemicals targeted in the Stockholm Convention, have been listed in the annexes of the convention text:

Annex A (Elimination): Parties must take measures to **eliminate** the production and use of the chemicals listed under Annex A. Specific exemptions for use or production are listed in the Annex and apply only to parties that register for them.

Chemicals Listed in Annexure A:

Aldrin, Chlordane, Chlordecone, Dieldrin, Endrin, Heptachlor, Hexabromophenyl, Hexabrmobiphelyether, Hexachlorbenzene, **Alpha hexachlorocyclohexane, Beta hexachlorocyclohexan, Lindane, Mirex,** Pentachlorobenzene**, Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB), Technical endosulfan and its related isomers,** Tetrabromobiphenyl ether, Toxaphere

Annex B (Restriction): Parties must take measures to **restrict** the production and use of the chemicals listed under Annex B in light of any applicable acceptable purposes and/or specific exemptions listed in the Annex.

Chemicals Listed in Annexure B:

DDT, **Perfluorooctane sulfonic acid, its salts and perfluorooctane sulfonyl fluoride**

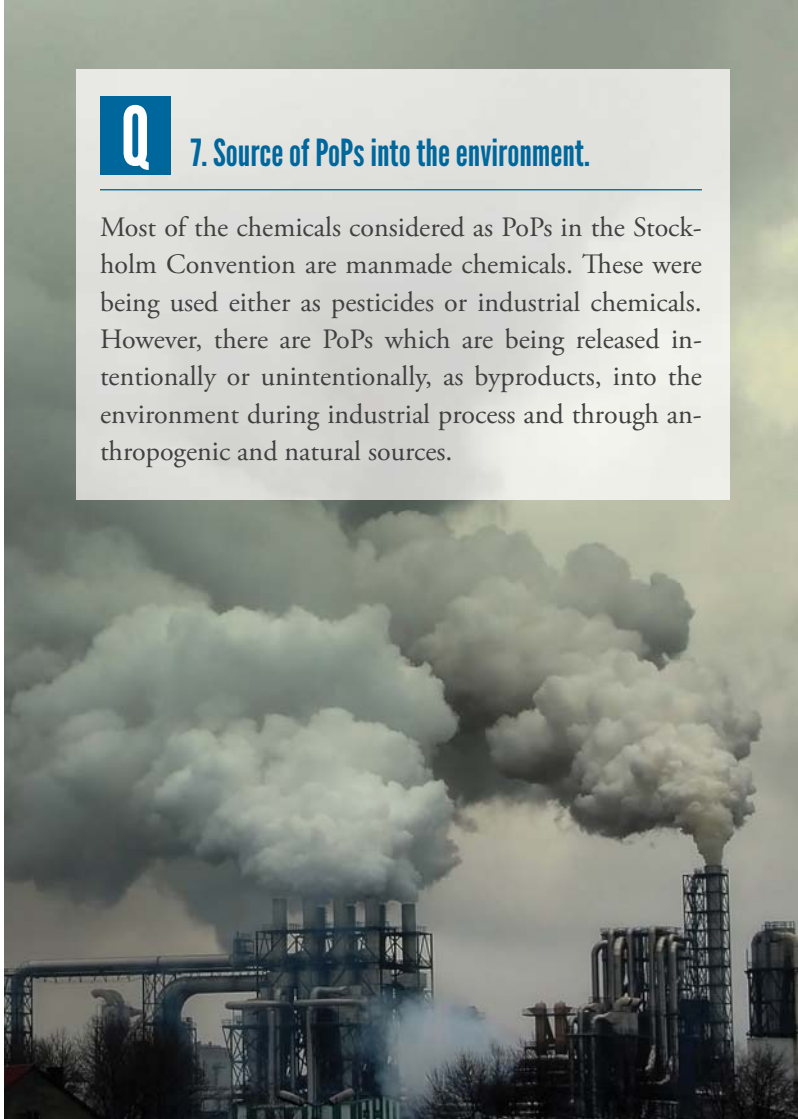
Annex C (Unintentional Production): Parties must take measures to reduce the **unintentional releases** of chemicals listed under Annex C with the goal of continuing minimization and where feasible, ultimate elimination.

Chemicals Listed in Annexure C:

Polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins (PCDD), Polychlorinated dibenzofurans (PCDF), Hexachlorobenzene (HCB)**, Pentachlorobenzene, Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB)**

Q 7. Source of PoPs into the environment.

Most of the chemicals considered as PoPs in the Stockholm Convention are manmade chemicals. These were being used either as pesticides or industrial chemicals. However, there are PoPs which are being released intentionally or unintentionally, as byproducts, into the environment during industrial process and through anthropogenic and natural sources.



Q 8. How Stockholm Convention operates?

Parties (Countries) must implement measures to reduce or eliminate POPs releases as called for in the Convention. In doing so they must develop a plan for the implementation of their obligations under the Convention, report on the measures taken to do so and may nominate chemicals for addition to the Convention.

The Conference of the Parties (COP) meets every two years to review the operation and implementation of the Convention and take decisions including whether or not to add new chemicals.

The POPs Review Committee (POPRC) which consists of government-designated experts, reviews chemicals proposed for addition to the Convention.

The DDT Expert Group evaluates the need to use DDT to control disease and reports findings to the COP for action.

The Global Monitoring Plan includes regional groups which develop data collection networks, prepare reports and a coordination group which prepares the global monitoring report that is used in evaluating the Convention's effectiveness.

Regional and sub-regional centers provide technical assistance and promote the transfer of technology to implement the Convention to developing countries or countries with economies in transition which are Parties to the Convention.

The Financial Mechanism provides financial resources to developing country Parties and Parties with economies in transition to implement the Convention. The Global Environment Facility serves as the principle entity entrusted with the operation of the mechanism.

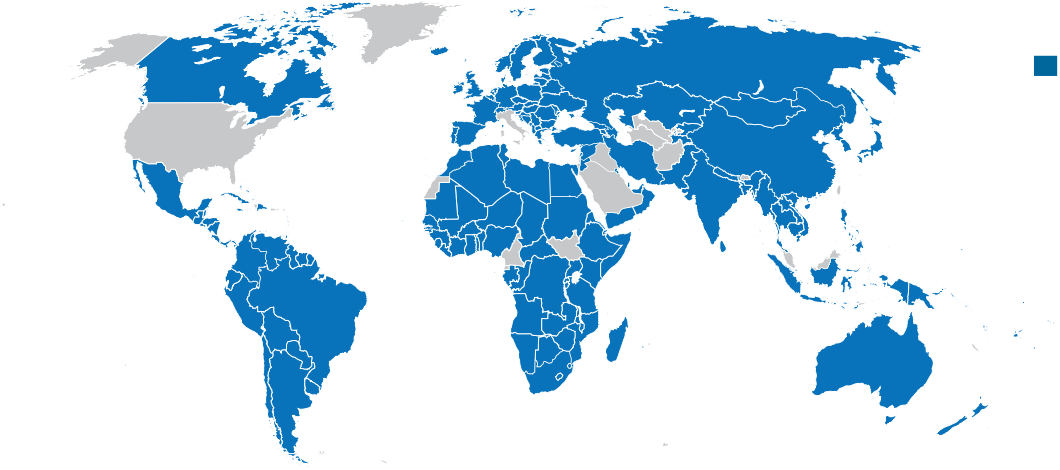
The Secretariat, which is provided by the United Nations Environment Programme, organizes Convention meetings, facilitates financial and technical assistance to Parties.

Q 9. How many countries have signed or ratified the Stockholm Convention?

The Stockholm Convention came into force on May 17, 2004, with ratification by 128 parties and 151 signatories. Saudi Arabia became the 178th party by ratifying the Convention on July 25, 2012.

Q 10. Has India signed /ratified Stockholm convention?

India actively participated in the International Negotiations Committee (INC) meeting before adoption of the Stockholm Convention. India signed the Convention on May 14, 2002 and ratified it on January 13, 2006. It came into force from April 12, 2006. Ironically the US has signed the convention but has not ratified it as yet.



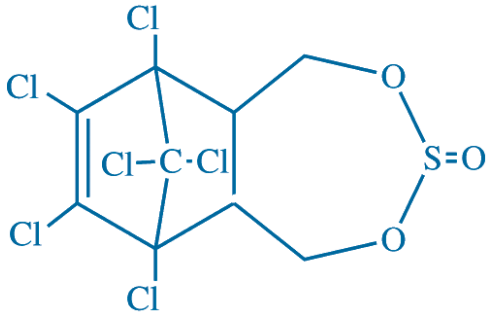
State parties to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
Source: wikipedia

Q 11. What are the implications of Stockholm Convention in India?

Since India ratified the Stockholm Convention, the government of India has the responsibility to adopt the provisions of the Convention. The Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) is the nodal agency for the Government to promulgate the new rules and regulations under the Environmental Protection Act 1986 in consonance with the Stockholm convention. Further the MoEF is responsible for effective implementation of the legislation, monitoring, promotion of environmental education and training and creating awareness on PoPs in the country.

Q 12. Does India ask for specific exemption for the use of banned PoPs?

India has got certain exemptions on the use of POPs that have been banned under the Stockholm Convention. Under these exemptions, Chlordane, HCB and mirex can be produced and used in India. Further, certain chemicals have got exemption from the ban for the specific time period.



Q 13. What is the National Implementation Plan?

As per the mandate, "Paragraph 1, Article- 7", each party shall develop and endeavor to implement a plan for the implementation of its obligations under the Stockholm Convention. Thus development of the National Implementation Plan (NIP) is the first step to implement the Stockholm Convention on PoPs. As a party to the convention, MoEF has prepared and submitted the National Implementation Plan for 12 PoPs that had been banned initially in April 2011. Further in accordance with the Convention, India will review and update the NIP according to the time frame given by the COP and include it in the action plan.

Q 14. Which are the main agencies to implement the NIP plan in India?

The Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India, is the nodal agency in India to implement the NIP in India. Apart from MoEF, other agencies such as Ministry of Agriculture, National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI), Central Pollution Control Board, National Institute of Interdisciplinary Science and Technology (NIIST), Trivandrum and Central Power Research Institute (CPRI), Bangalore, have an important role in implementing the NIP in India. NGOs in the country also have a crucial role in implementing it.

Q 15. Role of citizens in implementation of Stockholm Convention

POPs can cause serious environmental and health hazards which could adversely impact the common people. Hence the citizens can also play an important role in the reduction of PoPs into the environment and minimize the impact. The relevant organizations must create greater awareness among the citizens on the issue of PoPs and make them a part of the implementation process.

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1. *www.toxicslink.org*
2. *www.iprn.org*
3. *www.pops.int*
4. *National Implementation Plan: Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Government of India)*

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