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The International POPs Elimination Project

*Fostering Active and Effective Civil Society Participation in
Preparations for Implementation of the Stockholm Convention*

Argentina Country Situation Report on Persistent Organic Pollutants

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About the International POPs Elimination Project

On May 1, 2004, the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN <http://www.ipen.org>) began a global NGO project called the International POPs Elimination Project (IPEP) in partnership with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). The Global Environment Facility (GEF) provided core funding for the project.

IPEP has three principal objectives:

- Encourage and enable NGOs in 40 developing and transitional countries to engage in activities that provide concrete and immediate contributions to country efforts in preparing for the implementation of the Stockholm Convention;
- Enhance the skills and knowledge of NGOs to help build their capacity as effective stakeholders in the Convention implementation process;
- Help establish regional and national NGO coordination and capacity in all regions of the world in support of longer term efforts to achieve chemical safety.

IPEP will support preparation of reports on country situation, hotspots, policy briefs, and regional activities. Three principal types of activities will be supported by IPEP: participation in the National Implementation Plan, training and awareness workshops, and public information and awareness campaigns.

For more information, please see <http://www.ipen.org>

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The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not necessarily the views of the institutions providing management and/or financial support.

This report is available in the following languages: English language summary and Spanish full report

International POPs Elimination Project – IPEP
Website- www.ipen.org

Argentina Country Situation Report on Persistent Organic Pollutants

Summary

The object of this report is to give a national outline of the situation concerning Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in Argentina, consolidating elements such as: their principal characteristics and the sources that generate them; investigations describing environmental levels of POPs; the legislation that regulates them; the state of the Stockholm Convention implementation process; the options of use; and recommendations to prevent their formation and to procure elimination. The information is directed at non governmental organizations, academics, concerned people and the "powers of public politics" for its appropriation, multiplication and deeper understanding.

The existence of POPs across generations with unavoidable environmental liabilities, along with possibilities of known damage or even unknown damage and the responsibility to future generations make it advisable to focus attention on POPs. Instead of a fatalistic view of some about the impossibility of change, efforts should make it possible to accomplish the elimination of the production and use of POPs, the re-conversion of technologies that produce them and the mitigation of their effects., Awareness-raising of society is necessary to involve itself in strong and firm participative processes avoiding panic, clearing up confusions and changing indifference to action.

The POPs are a group of chemical substances that contain toxic properties and are resistant to degradation. They biomagnify in the food chain and are transported by air, water and migratory species all over the world and deposited far from the place of their liberation, accumulating in terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems.

The first twelve substances selected by the Stockholm Convention, which entered into force on 17 May 2004, are Aldrin, Chlordane, Dieldrin, Endrin, Heptachlor, Hexachlorobenzene (HCB), Mirex, Toxaphene, Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), 1,1,1-

trichloro-2,2-bis(4-chlorophenyl)ethane (DDT), Polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins and dibenzofurans (PCDD/PCDF) or dioxins and furans . Beside these twelve, there are many other substances that possess similar properties and whose sources, concentrations and effects in the environment must be evaluated. In Argentina, the Stockholm Convention was approved by law number 26011, sanctioned on 16 December 2004 and published in the official bulletin on 17 January, 2005.

The lack of systematic measurements of POPs over time should be taken into account when considering POPs levels in air, water and soil. With respect to the dioxins and furans, there is no official control. This does not give us much information about the levels of the twelve POPs of the Stockholm Convention in the environment, food and human tissues.

The existence of certain pollutants, present in water, sediment, soil and air in the reports is admitted. However, there is no government agency that links POPs with human afflictions.

In Argentina, the participation of civil society in reducing and eliminating POPs is principally aimed at the elimination and replacement of PCBs and the sources of dioxins and furans. This is due, in part to the fact that the pesticides included in the Stockholm Convention list have been prohibited in the country for many years.

Civil society engagement on dioxins and furans occurs through the Citizen's Anti-incineration Coalition - a network of NGOs and neighbors that fight against incineration and that inform the population about the effects of dioxins and furans and their sources. In the case of PCBs, some action has been taken because of public pressure such as the replacement of transformers and the realization of existing inventories in various parts of the country. In this sense the citizen networks, NGOs and Citizen National Coalition against PCBs occupy an important role in POPs elimination.

Citizen participation is fundamental in all the aspects related to POPs, but it is vital on some points as in the case of illegal burials, because it this information is not officially available. The cases of Estación Argentina and El Cuy, can be taken as examples.

In Argentina it is necessary to establish a plan to eliminate POPs that includes among other activities:

- To produce a valid inventory of the sources of dioxins and furans such as an inventory of contaminated sites with POPs. This inventory must be available to the public.
- To establish plans for the elimination of existing POPs and the remediation of contaminated sites through technologies that do not generate new POPs.
- To avoid the installation of new sources of POPs and to elaborate a phase-out plan for the existing ones.
- To guarantee the participation of the community in activities connected with the implementation of the Stockholm Convention.

A fluid dialog must be undertaken to implement this plan among all sectors that permits the dissemination of all possible information including mediators that could deal with sectoral differences between political employees, industries, labor organizations, unions and users that form an integral part of the community and are therefore affected by POPs.