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International POPs Elimination Project

*Fostering Active and Efficient Civil Society Participation in
Preparation for Implementation of the Stockholm Convention*

Global Day of Action on POPs in Lebanon

**Association pour la protection de l'environnement et du
Patrimoine- Nabatieh (APEP)**

**Lebanon
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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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Global Day of Action on POPs in Lebanon

At the beginning of the celebration, **Dr. Majed Ba'alabaki** welcomed the audience and introduced **Dr. Shams El Din**, and **Dr. Hesham Abu Goda** to the audience. He said the aim of the celebration was to promote awareness of the persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and highlight the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. He added that POPs are highly toxic and affect health and the environment.

Persistent organic pollutants include 12 substances. They are aldrin, endrin, chlordane, DDT, mirex, dieldrin, heptachlor, toxaphene, hexachlorobenzene, PCBs, dioxins and furans. They are organic hydrocarbon substances which do not decompose and remain in the environment for a long period. They dissolve in fats and accumulate in fat tissues of living organisms. They are volatile and spread in the air for long distances. Even the small amounts of POPs are toxic and are easily absorbed in foods with high fat concentrations.

Direct exposure to POPs can have serious effects. For instance, pesticides caused the death or serious illness of farm workers. However, it is not easy to provide clear evidence of the damages caused by low levels POPs to man, such as cancer, dysfunction of the immune system, damages to the nervous system, memory loss, liver damage, endocrine glands, deformities in newly born children and problems related to reproduction.

He said that non-government societies should cooperate in order promote awareness in the society.

After that, **Dr. Hesham Abu Goda** started talking. He said that the twentieth century led to the invention of numerous chemical substances. These chemical substances are now in the tissues of every man on earth. They cause cancer and harm the nervous system, the reproductive system and the immune system. It is true that the chemical revolution led to man's welfare by fighting pests and increasing the farm produce. But in the meantime, it was accompanied by toxic reactions that remained in the environment for years. They can move easily from one place to another. They are found in the North and South Poles and in distant islands and oceans. Dioxins and furans are the most common because they are capable of causing cancer. They became widely known in the late 1990s when it was found that they polluted the flesh of chicken in many European countries. Dr. Hesham Abu Goda pointed out that the sources of dioxin are as follows:

Emissions from:

- the incineration of rubbish; hospital refuse; cement and glass kilns; copper, aluminum and lead foundries; incineration of oils, fuels and cables; paper manufacturing; incineration of fuel containing lead or free from it; cigarettes.

He added that dioxin emissions can be reduced by the following:

Addition of deactivating substances; use of ceramic or silicone dust remover; flooding emissions with water; avoiding the existence of copper because it acts as a catalyst for the formation of dioxin; avoiding the existence of high amounts of chlorine.

How to Avoid Dioxin?

1. Eating less quantities of ocean fish;
2. Drinking low fat milk;
3. Avoiding full cream dairy products;
4. Avoiding the use of chlorine chemicals;
5. Avoiding chlorine bleaching substances;
6. Avoiding the use of pesticides and insecticides
7. Avoiding the use of Polyvinyl chloride (PVC);
8. Washing of all fruit and vegetables carefully;
9. Avoiding the use of kinds of soap containing animal fat or deodorants containing chlorophenol;
10. Avoiding products containing cotton seed oil because the cotton produce is sprayed with chlorophenol; and
11. Avoiding the incineration of chlorine waste and empty containers of pesticides or cleaners because they might contain chlorine traces.

Dr. Shams El Din talked about the Stockholm Convention with respect to Persistent Organic Pollutants targets 12 toxic POPs to limit their use and get rid of them, adding that the transfer of POPs depends on the temperature. They evaporate in hot places and move with wind and dust. They rest on earth in cold places. Then, they evaporate and move again, and so on. When these pollutants are far from the equator, they face a colder climate and evaporation becomes less. Consequently, these pollutants move to the south and north poles as well as hills.

These chemical substances polluted rivers and lakes in industrial areas, have caused the death or poisoning of fish and led to serious damage of human health.

The Convention covers two groups of chemical by-products, i.e. dioxins and furans. These compounds have no commercial uses. Dioxins and furans are the result of combustion and industrial processes such as the production of pesticides, Polyvinyl chloride and other chlorine substances. Dioxins and furans are the most common chemical substances because they can cause cancer.

Some of the POPs targeted by the Stockholm Convention have nearly disappeared, banned or extremely restricted in many countries for several years. However, their clear toxic effects are still remaining.

Dr. Shams El Din sees that it is necessary to establish a programme that aims at making the society aware of the harmful effects of persistent organic pollutants.

Finally, the following recommendations were proposed.

- Increasing general awareness of POPs;
- Distribution of posters containing the definition of POPs and how to avoid them;
- Development and circulation of chemical substances and alternative solutions; and
- Encouraging and conducting of research concerned with POPs.