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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 Egypt

Arab Office for Youth and Environment (AOYE)

**Egypt
August 2005**

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 Egypt

The Arab Office for Youth and Environment (AOYE) celebrated this year the Global Day of Action. “It is one of the most important celebrations at the global level, in cooperation with the day of hospital association and through the fund of UNIDO.

The purpose of the celebration was to gather all concerned parties together and to give some crucial information about the Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) that enable those in charge to better manage their work and to play a concrete role in dealing with such hazardous substances.

We were seeking media involvement in the process and how they can affect the public in giving more attention and patience for wise treatment and dealing with the POPs in their daily life to save themselves and their children from relevant diseases.

The meeting and the celebration was like a red spotlight for many issues that we are ignoring unconsciously or on purpose in our life either through the decision takers or the public. So, we invited all concerned parties to see how we can tackle our local problems together for the sake of better healthy life for ourselves and our new generations and how to start executing the conventions that we are signing but not applying.

The presence by the end of the celebration valued very deeply the danger we are facing and felt the need of taking actions and very quick actions towards POPs on all levels. The media representatives promised to adopt campaigns in their various entities to stress this matter and to encourage all to stop using POPs and to help the audience become well aware about the serious situation we are facing.

Celebration Date:

August 10th, 2005

Celebration location:

The Headquarters of Arab Office for Youth and Environment “AOYE”, Cairo, Egypt.

Present:

Dr. Emad Adly, Chairman of AOYE.

Dr. Mohamed El Zarka, International Environmental Expert.

Eng. Essam Nada, Executive Director (AOYE)

Dr. Suzan Abdel Shahid, Head of Environmental Health Dep. - Giza Governorate.

Dr. Wafaa Shalaby, Ministry of Health.

Mr. Gamal Saleh, Head of Environmental Affairs Dep. - Cairo Governorate.

Mr. Yousri Abdel Aal, Head of Environmental Affairs Dep. - Giza Governorate

Dr. Mohamed Abdel Khalik, Ministry of Irrigation and Water Resource.

Gen. Amgad El Amir, Ministry of Interior.

Mass Media Representatives, “Radio, News Papers, T.V”

Youth Leaders.

The Celebration Proceedings:

The meeting started at 12:00 with an introduction of Dr. Emad Adly the Chairman of AOYE and the National Coordinator of the Small Grants Program/ Global Environment Facility (GEF/SGP)" Dr. Adly delivered a lecture about the leading role of the Arab Office for Youth and Environment "AOYE" as an Egyptian NGO in mobilizing the community to adopt environmental issues and to advocate solving such problems by community participation.

He showed the role of AOYE Hotline Service in drawing the map of Environmental problems in Greater Cairo and the other five followed big cities in Egypt in the responsibility of protecting the environment. He also mentioned that the Stockholm Convention "...as a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from persistent organic pollutants (POPs). The presentation also focused on how the Global Environment Facility is working to support the implementation of the Stockholm Convention

Dr. Mohamed El-Zarka explained that the treaty, called the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, which is considered a major achievement on the global level. He showed that the treaty started by targeting 12 particularly toxic POPs for reduction and eventual elimination.

The Convention became international law, on 17 May 2004. In April 2005, over 90 countries have joined as Parties; many more are expected to become members over the next several years.

He also presented that these 12 POPs have a very harmful features like:

- 1) They are highly toxic;
- 2) They are persistent, lasting for years or even decades before degrading into less dangerous forms;
- 3) They evaporate and travel long distances through the air and through water;

Dr. Wafaa Shalabi, Explained that POPs are chemicals that remain in the environment for long periods, and became widely distributed geographically, and accumulate in the fatty tissue of living organisms and are toxic to humans and wildlife. He mentioned that the POPs could circulate globally and it can cause damage wherever they traveled and showed that the fundamental objective of the Stockholm Convention is the protection of human health and the environment. The message clarified that POPs have a great impact on the health of people in developing countries, on women during pregnancy and breastfeeding, on future generations, and on indigenous communities due to contamination of traditional foods.

General Amgad El Amir, explained the efforts of the Ministry of Interior in issuing the new Traffic Law which forces car owners to do a technical test before issuing licenses, which can reduce the toxic emission from car engines which reduces the green gas and other toxic emissions.

Finally all the attendance recommended that:

By implementing the Convention, Governments can take measures to eliminate or reduce the release of POPs into the environment

Governments should develop and implement strategies for identifying products containing POPs. Once identified, these products need to be managed in a safe, efficient and environmentally sound manner.

Civil society organizations have to play an effective role to increase public awareness of the dangers of POPs, provide up-to-date information on these pollutants, launch educational programs, train specialists, and develop and disseminate alternative chemicals and solutions.