

The first 12 POPs

The Stockholm Convention initially targeted 12 of the most persistent and toxic chemicals ever created. These include nine pesticides: **aldrin, chlordane, DDT, dieldrin, endrin, heptachlor, hexachlorobenzene (HCB), mirex, and toxaphene**. They are used for agricultural and public health purposes. DDT is still used against mosquitoes to control malaria in several countries. It is infamous for decimating bald eagle, osprey, and other predatory bird populations and for contaminating nursing mothers' milk.

In addition, two industrial chemicals were targeted by the Convention.

Hexachlorobenzene is used as a solvent and in the production of other chemicals. **Polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB)** are a group of chemicals widely used in electrical transformers and hydraulic equipment. These have been notorious for polluting rivers and lakes in industrial regions, poisoning fish, and causing various human health problems.

Finally, unintentional chemical by-products, including **polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins** and **dibenzofurans (PCDD/PCDF)**, are addressed by the Convention. These compounds result from combustion and industrial processes but have no commercial use. These chemical by-products are among the most potent cancer-causing chemicals known.

The 9 new POPs

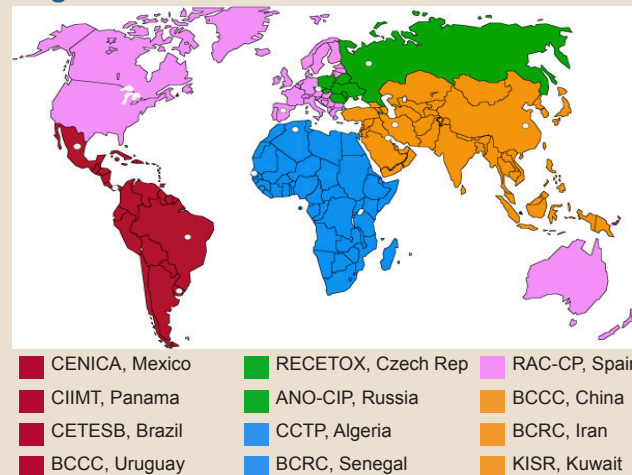
Following the recommendations of the POPs Review Committee, the Conference of the Parties decided to list 9 new chemicals at its fourth meeting held in May 2009.

Two are pesticides: **chloredecone** and **lindane** (in the absence of alternatives, the latter can still be used as a pharmaceutical to control head lice and scabies).

Four are industrial chemicals, three of which were used as flame retardants: **hexabromobiphenyl, commercial pentabromodiphenyl ether** (tetrabromodiphenyl ether and pentabromodiphenyl ether) and **commercial octabromodiphenyl ether** (hexabromodiphenyl ether and heptabromodiphenyl ether). The last industrial chemical, **perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS), its salts and perfluorooctane sulfonyl fluoride (PFOS-F)** has widespread uses, from electronics to photo imaging, hydraulic fluids to textiles.

Finally, **alpha hexachlorocyclohexane** and **beta hexachlorocyclohexane** are both pesticides and by-products of lindane, while **pentachlorobenzene** is both a pesticide, an industrial chemical and a by-product of combustion and industrial processes.

Regional Centres



Partners

In addition to the Secretariats of the Basel and Rotterdam Conventions, the Secretariat of the Stockholm Convention works closely with various partners, including the Global Environment Facility and its implementing and executing agencies (United Nations Environment Programme, United Nations Development Programme, World Bank, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations), the World Health Organization, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management.

Where to find us

Secretariat of the Stockholm Convention
UNEP
International Environment House
11-13 Chemin des Anémones
1219 Châtelaine (Geneva)
Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 917 8729
Fax: +41 22 917 8098
Email: ssc@pops.int

www.pops.int

AT A GLANCE



Stockholm Convention

The Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) is a global treaty to protect human health and the environment from highly dangerous, long-lasting chemicals by restricting and ultimately eliminating their production, use, trade, release and storage.

Why the Stockholm Convention is important

The 20th century led to the invention and worldwide use of thousands of synthetic chemicals in agriculture and industry. Today, chemicals have a truly international reach. Their global footprint has accumulated in almost every living thing, including human beings. POPs are of special concern.

POPs are in our homes, in the air we breathe, in the water we drink and the food we eat. They can be found in pesticides, paint additives, heat exchange fluids, transformers, sealants and plastics. They are in the waste of industries and hospitals. Some are also released as unintended by-products of combustion and industrial processes.

Although these chemicals have contributed to our general well-being, exposure to them can also cause serious health problems. POPs remain intact in the environment for long periods. They gradually accumulate in the fatty tissue of living organisms, and can cause cancer and birth defects. POPs may also disrupt immune and reproductive systems and even diminish intelligence.

The Stockholm Convention leads the way towards a POPs-free future.



Pesticides were the original targets of the Stockholm Convention, but DDT is still used in some countries to control malaria.

How it works

The Stockholm Convention protects people and the environment from POPs by:

Eliminating production and use. Most of the intentionally produced POPs are targeted for immediate elimination with very few exceptions. PCBs are the most notable exception. Production has been stopped but their use in existing equipment is allowed until 2025 to ensure that PCBs are disposed of in an environmentally sound manner.

Restricting production and use. The Convention allows very limited and carefully controlled use of certain POPs while also seeking alternatives. For example, DDT is only allowed to be used to control disease vectors like the mosquitoes that carry malaria.

Reducing unintentional production with the aim of elimination. The Convention promotes the use of the best available means of preventing the release of dioxins and furans from major sources into the environment.

Ensuring wastes containing POPs are managed safely and in an environmentally sound manner. The Convention requires that such wastes be identified and managed to reduce or eliminate POPs releases from these sources

Targeting additional POPs. The Convention is charged with identifying other POPs chemicals that require action. This is achieved through a scientifically rigorous process and ensures that those chemicals are considered even if there is a lack of scientific certainty about the harm they cause.



Who does what?

Parties 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 centres provide technical assistance and promote the transfer of technology to Parties that are developing countries or countries with economies in transition to implement 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 operations of the mechanism.

The Secretariat, which is provided by the United Nations Environment Programme, organizes Convention meetings, facilitates financial and technical assistance to Parties and acts as a clearing-house mechanism for POPs information.

