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**United Nations
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**Conference of the Parties of the Stockholm
Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants
First meeting**
Punta del Este, Uruguay, 2–6 May 2005
Item 6 (f) of the provisional agenda*

**Matters for consideration or action by the Conference
of the Parties: information exchange**

**Clearing-house mechanism for information exchange on persistent
organic pollutants****

Note by the Secretariat

1. Paragraph 4 of Article 9 of the Stockholm Convention states that the Secretariat of the Convention shall serve as a clearing-house mechanism for information on persistent organic pollutants, including information provided by Parties, intergovernmental organizations and non-governmental organizations. In its decision INC-6/7, the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for an International Legally Binding Instrument for International Action on Certain Persistent Organic Pollutants recognized the importance of such a mechanism and requested the Secretariat to prepare, taking into account submissions by Governments, a detailed work plan and budget on the initiation and maintenance of such a mechanism for consideration by the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee at its seventh session. As indicated in the report of the Committee on the work of its seventh session (UNEP/POPS/INC.7/28), during its consideration of that item, the Committee...

“noted the importance of providing funds for a dedicated staff member to work on the clearing-house mechanism beginning in 2005 and to complete a phase one analysis of possible clearing-house expanded functions in time for the first meeting of the Conference of the Parties and agreed to fund such work beginning in 2005.”

2. The current clearing-house operation of the Secretariat developed in a largely ad hoc fashion during the negotiation and interim implementation of the Convention. Information is delivered to users primarily through the Convention web site, training workshops and hard-copy and CD-ROM mailings.

* UNEP/POPS/COP.1/1.

** Stockholm Convention, Article 9, paragraph 4; Report of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for an International Legally Binding Instrument for Implementing International Action on Certain Persistent Organic Pollutants on the work of its sixth session (UNEP/POPS/INC.6/22), annex I, decision INC-6/7; Report of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on the work of its seventh session (UNEP/POPS/INC.7/28), paragraphs 93-96.

The mechanism is neither systematic nor exhaustive in its design and content and is not updated on a regular basis. While it manages to meet immediate needs in information exchange, it falls short of being a comprehensive clearing-house mechanism.

3. The information exchanged on the Convention web site includes:
 - (a) All meeting and information documents of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee and its subsidiary bodies;
 - (b) The address list of national focal points;
 - (c) Information on the status of signature and ratification of the Convention;
 - (d) A calendar of events;
 - (e) Correspondence to and from the Secretariat;
 - (f) Information relating to national implementation plans;
 - (g) Information on workshops relating to the implementation of the Convention;
 - (h) Information on the general steps to be taken by countries wishing to ratify or accede to the Convention;
 - (i) Guidance documents;
 - (j) Other background information.
4. The recruitment of the new staff member referred to in paragraph 1 above will enable further development of the clearing-house mechanism, including, in particular, through:
 - (a) The investigation of the types of information that should be exchanged through the mechanism, bearing in mind the needs of Parties and their obligations under the Convention;
 - (b) The assessment of the needs of Parties for relevant documents to be translated into the six official United Nations languages and for the central electronic programme to be accessed in those languages;
 - (c) The identification of existing clearing-house mechanisms that may contribute to the exchange of information pertinent to the objectives and obligations of the Stockholm Convention;
 - (d) The identification of potential local and regional partners that may contribute to the clearing-house mechanism;
 - (e) The selection of Parties prepared to participate in the pilot phase of the clearing-house mechanism, whose experiences will contribute to the success of the expansion process.
5. The Secretariat will submit for review at the second meeting of the Conference of the Parties a proposal incorporating:
 - (a) A structure to promote the participation of the various entities, including decentralized local and regional networks and a capacity assistance network;
 - (b) A proposal for the development of a database;
 - (c) The identification of training materials required by Parties and other participating entities;

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- (d) A programme designed to build the capacities of developing country Parties to a specified level of competence, in order to improve access to the clearing-house mechanism;
 - (e) An action programme for the implementation of the pilot phase;
 - (f) A budget for the financing of the pilot phase.

6. The Secretariat proposes that the clearing-house mechanism should periodically be reviewed and evaluated by the Conference of the Parties, and that it should be:

(a) Available and accessible to all Parties as an information exchange service that enhances the capacity of Parties to fulfil their obligations under the Convention;

(b) Based, where feasible, on existing network systems and designed to seek synergy through linkages with existing relevant institutions to avoid duplication and overlap;

(c) Inclusive in its operations, allowing access by Parties with varied levels of technological expertise in communication;

(d) Established initially on the basis of the subject areas for information exchange that are currently being serviced by the Secretariat, with the addition of other areas reflecting the needs of Parties for technical and financial information and assistance.

7. The Secretariat further proposes that the clearing-house mechanism should concentrate initially on:

- (a) Information exchange requirements under the Convention;
- (b) Transfer of technology;
- (c) Developing national capabilities;
- (d) Promoting technical cooperation;
- (e) Mobilizing financial resources.

Possible action by the Conference of the Parties

8. The Conference of the Parties may wish to:

(a) Note the progress made in the development of the clearing-house mechanism;

(b) Endorse the principles contained in paragraph 6 above, in order to guide the further development of the mechanism;

(c) Request the Secretariat to submit for the review and possible decision of the Conference of the Parties at its second meeting a full proposal containing the elements outlined in paragraph 5 above.