



Report

Polychlorinated Biphenyls Elimination Network (PEN) Information Meeting for Members and Others Interested in PCB

Geneva, Switzerland, 6 May 2013

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Polychlorinated Biphenyls Elimination Network Information Meeting for Members and Others Interested in PCB

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Meeting Report

1 OPENING OF THE MEETING

1. The meeting of the Polychlorinated Biphenyls Elimination Network (PEN) was held in Geneva at the International Conference Centre in Geneva, Switzerland, on 6 May 2013 from 6:15 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.. The meeting was held as an evening side event to the Ordinary and Extraordinary Meetings of the Conferences of the Parties to the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions. Such meeting had been proposed by the Advisory Committee of the PEN at its fourth meeting, held in Beijing, China, September 2012. The meeting was organized by the PEN Secretariat, which is hosted by the Chemicals Branch, Division of Technology, Industry and Economics (DTIE) of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

2. The meeting was opened at 6:30 p.m. by Ms. Heidi Fiedler, Coordinator of the PEN Secretariat and Senior Scientific Affairs Officer of the Chemicals Branch, DTIE, UNEP. In her opening statement, she welcomed the participants to the meeting and introduced the meeting programme and the speakers: Mr. Matthias Kern, Senior Programme Officer at the Technical Assistance Branch of the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions (BRS Secretariat), Mr. Urs Wagner, Technical Consultant at the ETI Environmental Technology Limited, Switzerland, Ms. Leila Devia, Director of the Basel Convention Regional Centre for South America, Argentina and Mr. John Vijgen, Director of the International HCH & Pesticides Association, Denmark.

2 ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

3. The programme of the meeting and the list of participants are set out in the appendix to this report.

4. The PEN Secretariat referred to decision SC-5/7 of the Conferences of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention, documents UNEP/POPS/COP.6/9 and UNEP/POPS/COP.6/INF/5, the meeting report of the fourth meeting of the PEN Advisory Committee which included the workplan and budget for 2012-2015 as well as the modified PEN membership application form. Participants were informed that the documents and presentations were available on the PEN webpage.

3 ACTIVITIES OF THE POLYCHLORINATED BIPHENYLS ELIMINATION NETWORK

3.1 Report from the Polychlorinated Biphenyls Elimination Network Secretariat

5. Ms. Heidi Fiedler started the meeting with a presentation entitled 'Introduction of the PEN and Status 2013'.

6. She shared the news on reclassification of polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) by the International Agency for Research on Cancer. On the basis of sufficient evidence of carcinogenicity in humans and experimental animals, PCB had been classified as carcinogenic to humans (Group 1). Dioxin-like PCB had also been classified in Group 1.

7. She highlighted the need to attain the 2025 and 2028 goals of the Stockholm Convention with respect to PCB. It was suggested during the course of the meeting to develop and submit a global project proposal to the Global Environment Facility to put PEN on a more solid basis for operation with the aim to assess the activities undertaken towards the 2028 goal of PCB elimination and harmonizing activities to avoid duplication.

8. She gave an overview of PEN and presented the modified PEN membership application form. She informed that the electronic document of the application form would be available on the website soon. She also informed that the two mailing addresses of the PEN Secretariat (pen@pops.int and heidelore.fiedler@unep.org) were both functioning.

9. She introduced POPs Social, the information exchange platform for PEN members, and requested for ideas on how to revitalize it. She introduced the first issue of the PEN magazine and asked for opinions on the future of the magazine. It was proposed to develop the second issue of the PEN magazine, but only in electronic format to save cost.

10. She introduced decision SC-5/7 of the Conferences of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention - the decision on the transfer of PEN leadership from the Secretariat of the Stockholm Convention to UNEP - and explained its implementation so far and the activities undertaken by UNEP since the transfer of PEN. She introduced two documents (UNEP/POPS/COP.6/9 and UNEP/POPS/COP.6/INF/5), namely the reports from UNEP to the sixth meeting of the Conferences of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention. She stressed the need for more targeted activities to raise funds to implement PEN activities.

11. She briefed participants on the past meetings of the Advisory Committee. She said the fourth meeting of the Advisory Committee and the first meeting of the Thematic Groups had recently been held from 7 to 9 September 2012 in Beijing, China and presented its meeting report. She also introduced the status of the development of guidance documents and fact-sheets by each Thematic Group and highlighted the need to speed up the process to meet the deadline of February 2014. She also introduced the workplan and the budget for the two biennia 2012-2013 and 2014-2015.

12. She explained the composition and terms of the Advisory Committee and requested for the new Advisory Committee members to be nominated and confirmed by 30 June 2013. She gave an overview of the current PEN member status, encouraged the applications of non-

members and requested the members to provide changes in contact information or member status to the PEN Secretariat.

13. Finally, she acknowledged the financial contributions from the BRS Secretariat, governments of Sweden and Finland and thanked the members and participants to the event.

14. A question and answer session followed. There was a remark that the international standards, such as the European Union standard, should be applied in developing new guidance documents. Ms. Heidi Fiedler responded that the objective of PEN was to facilitate the communication on the work of the other actors and make public the existing work and thus prevent the duplication of work.

15. A concern was raised regarding the current classification of PCB as waste. Ms. Heidi Fiedler responded that the classification was guided by the decision of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention.

16. A discussion followed on the question whether the manufacturers should be held liable according to the polluter pays principle. It was mentioned that India had never manufactured PCB and had started using alternatives since 1996 but bore the burden today as it had been using PCB without proper knowledge.

3.2 Report from the Secretariat of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions

17. Mr. Matthias Kern, Senior Programme Officer at the Technical Assistance Branch of the BRS Secretariat, thanked the Chemicals Branch for taking over the function of the PEN Secretariat. He congratulated the smooth and successful transition in the past two years, and confirmed that the BRS Secretariat would continue its cooperation and commitment as a member of the PEN and the Advisory Committee and as a provider of the PEN clearing house mechanism. He recalled the discussions at the fourth meeting of the Advisory Committee and emphasized the benefit of a synergistic approach in maintaining the network. He mentioned the interlinkage between the Stockholm Convention and the Basel Convention on disposal of PCB waste and highlighted PEN as a good example of a synergy process.

18. Ms. Heidi Fiedler thanked Mr. Matthias Kern and indicated that the use of both logos of UNEP and the Stockholm Convention in PEN activities was intentional to demonstrate the close linkage between the Chemicals Branch and the BRS Secretariat.

3.3 Presentation from Mr. Urs Wagner, an international expert

19. Mr. Urs Wagner, Technical Consultant at the ETI Environmental Technology Limited, Switzerland, gave a presentation entitled 'Expert's Perspectives to PEN and PCB Management'. He emphasized that his presentation was intended to provide the neutral and critical perspective of a Swiss expert.

20. He provided suggestions for the future activities of the PEN Magazine, POPs Social and guidelines and factsheets development.

21. He regretted that the transition of the PEN Secretariat had caused uncertainties and had put on hold many PEN activities, but appreciated that the transition was now concluded with clear leadership in place. He gave ideas on what should be done to strengthen the PEN and provide useful outputs for the next Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention.

22. He presented technical issues related to the disposal of PCB and suggested that reliable PCB assessment, appropriate technology selection and priority setting was needed for sustainable PCB management. He added that unnecessary and additional costs could be reduced by preventing the issue of cross contamination. On the issue of controlled recycling and disposal, he regretted that although there were plenty of guidelines and regulations, they were not being used because of unawareness, missing implementation and control and ignorance, among others due to financial constraints, and suggested that prevention was a cheaper and easier solution than remediation. He then summarized the main sources of diffuse PCB pollution.

23. He concluded that approved disposal and treatment technologies were available, that costs were transparent and fair with transportation remaining to be the costly and risky issue, that appropriate interim storage options would be available but not as a long term solution, and that the current focus should be on adaptation of existing inventories, prevention of further unnecessary cross contamination and unintentional formation of PCDD/PCDF and disposal. He noted that it was necessary to further develop respectively adapt Guidelines and incorporate appropriate strategies considering all stakeholders and all levels of workers and management.

24. Following the presentation, a representative from the Stockholm Convention Regional Center in Asia and the Pacific briefly introduced the inventory guideline which had been developed by the Regional Centre. She added that printed circuit board was stated as hazardous waste because of heavy metals and PCB. She said that capacitors containing PCB oils were relatively safe, but that the challenge was to identify which capacitors contained PCB oil and which did not. There was a remark that it was the safest to keep and use PCB in closed applications, but that problems would arise when it would become waste.

25. There was a discussion on which alternative technologies were available and concerns were raised that the plasma technology was too costly for India.

3.4 Presentation from Ms. Leila Devia, the implementing agency for the Latin America and the Caribbean regional project on PCB management in the mining sector

26. Ms. Leila Devia, Director of the Basel Convention Regional Centre for South America, Argentina, gave a presentation on best practices in PCB management in the mining industry in South America in Chile and Peru.

27. She introduced the project that had been implemented by the Basel Convention Regional Centre in South America, and said it was the first time that a project had been implemented in two countries where the regional centre was not hosted. She explained that as a result of the project, the assessments and reference documents for the region had been produced, and the application of best practices and the introduction of the best technologies had been facilitated.

28. She said the commitment and involvement of public and private sectors from both Chile and Peru had made direct impact on the project. She added that the management and mediation of disagreements among mining industry partners had been important for the project's success.

29. She explained that it had been the first project of the Centre which had been funded by the Global Environment Facility and two countries had benefited by making use of the available documents developed in the context of the project.

30. Ms. Heidi Fiedler responded by welcoming the contribution from mining sector, a non traditional partner to the project.

3.5 Presentation from Mr. John Vijgen, an international expert

31. Mr. John Vijgen, Director of the International HCH & Pesticides Association, Denmark, made a presentation on the progress in establishing new fact sheets for persistent organic pollutants (POPs) destruction under the Basel Convention.

32. After giving a brief history of the work to develop the fact sheets since 2001, he explained that new fact sheets were under development since 2011, as had been requested by the Secretariat of the Basel Convention, to better confirm to the Basel Convention's Technical guidelines on the environmentally sound management of wastes containing or contaminated with unintentionally produced PCDD, PCDF, HCB or PCB.

33. During this presentation, there were discussions on issues such as pros and cons of incineration based technology, best available techniques and best environmental practices.

4 CLOSURE OF THE MEETING

34. After the customary exchange of courtesies, the meeting was closed at 8:30 p.m. on 6 May 2013.

5 APPENDIX 1: MEETING AGENDA

 PCB Elimination Network Information meeting for members and others interested in PCB	
6 May 2013, 18:15 h - 19:45 h Geneva International Conference Centre (CICG), Room 15	
Agenda	
Welcome	PEN Secretariat
Introduction of the PEN and status 2013	Heidelore Fiedler, UNEP Chemicals, PEN Secretariat
Advisory Committee Members	
BRS Secretariat on transition	Matthias Kern, BRS Secretariat
PEN and PCB management from expert's point of view	Urs Wagner, International Expert
PEN Members	
Regional PCB project	Leila Devia, Basel Regional Center, ARG
Factsheets on POPs destruction technologies	John Vijgen, International HCH and Pesticides Association
Questions and answers	

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