

**Regional Capacity Building Workshop on PCBs and POPs Wastes in Spanish-speaking Central American and Caribbean countries and****First Meeting of the PEN Thematic Group on Maintenance****Panama City, Panama, 15-18 February 2011****MEETING REPORT****Organization**

The first meeting of the PCB Elimination Network (PEN) Thematic group on maintenance of PCB equipment was organized back to back with the eighth regional training workshop on the environmentally sound management (ESM) of POPs wastes and PCBs with support by the Centro de Investigación e Información de Medicamentos y Tóxicos (CIIMET), a Stockholm Convention Centre for Capacity Building and Technology Transfer for the Latin America and the Caribbean Region. The meeting was held from 15 to 18 February 2011 at the Crowne Plaza hotel in Panama City, Panama. Among the participants of the meeting were the Focal Points and Contact Points of the Stockholm Convention from participating countries, representatives from the private sector, international experts, staff of regional UN offices and national stakeholders.

Goals of the workshop

The objectives of the regional workshop were to enhance the capacity of participants on the concepts, principles and standards for the ESM of PCBs oils, PCB-containing equipment and POPs wastes, to raise awareness about the activities of the PCB Elimination Network (PEN) and to gather input to the draft guidance on the maintenance, handling, and interim storage of PCB equipment. The workshop also aimed at achieving agreement on a way forward to address regional and national challenges related to maintenance of PCB equipment and the ESM of POPs wastes, in particular new POPs wastes.

Participants

The following countries were represented: Belize, Chile, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama and Paraguay.

Summary of the activities

The meeting was opened on Tuesday, 15 February 2011, by Ms. Betty Ann Rowe de Catsambanis, vicepresident of research and postgraduate studies of the University of Panama, Dr. Eduardo Lucas Mora, health general director of the Ministry of Health and Ms. Kei Ohno from the Secretariat of the Stockholm Convention. This was followed by introductory presentations on the Stockholm Convention and the PEN. In the afternoon, participants heard about key issues related to the ESM of PCB from the international expert and country specific experiences from selected participants. The second day of the workshop included discussion of the guidance on the maintenance, handling, and interim storage of PCB equipment. The participants worked in breakout group sessions on simulation exercises that allowed them to apply the principles of the ESM of PCB wastes to address practical problems. The participants also heard from the representative of the Global Environmental Facility (GEF) about assessment criteria for projects submitted for funding under the 5th replenishment of the GEF Trust Fund. On the third day of the workshop, the participants undertook a field trip to visit a PCB waste management facility at an electricity company and an

interim storage site for obsolete pesticides. The fourth day was dedicated to the ESM of POPs wastes, with an emphasis on new POPs wastes and included discussions of country experience in this area. Participants also heard a presentation on the agenda of the upcoming fifth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties. Discussions throughout the workshop on issues and challenges faced at the national level for the ESM of POPs and PCB wastes contributed to the development of recommendations and action plans for a way forward in addressing these challenges at the regional level.

Outcomes of the workshop:

Presentations by participants indicated that their countries had all developed a national implementation plan (NIP) for the Stockholm Convention and were at varying stages of implementation. The participants highlighted the following impediments to efficient implementation of the NIPs:

1. Poor general awareness about the hazards posed by POPs and the need to phase out their production and use.
2. Inadequate financial resources available to institutions that are specifically responsible for the management of POPs.
3. Project implementation is hampered by complicated bureaucratic arrangements; this problem is accentuated for projects implemented jointly by several countries requiring the signing of multiple memoranda of understanding and the transfer of funds between bank accounts in different countries.
4. Changes of government and/or institutions in countries make it difficult to implement projects efficiently and to meet deadlines.
5. Lack of adequate infrastructure such as high temperature incinerators and/or sanitary landfills for the environmentally sound disposal of hazardous wastes.

Discussions throughout the workshop on issues and challenges faced at the national level for the ESM of POPs and PCB wastes contributed to the development of the following recommendations for a way forward in addressing these challenges at the regional level:

General recommendations on the management of POPs and the ESM of POPs wastes:

1. There is a need for strengthened regional cooperation towards achieving the following:
 - a) Develop regional initiatives that allow countries with more capacity to support other countries in implementing the ESM of POPs and their wastes.
 - b) Facilitate decision making at a regional level on the management of POPs wastes and the trade of products containing POPs and their ESM.

Governments should also make use of existing regional coordination mechanisms such as the Central American Integration System and of the capacities of the regional centres of the Stockholm and Basel Conventions.

2. Increased resources should be directed towards human resource development in the area of chemicals and POPs management, in particular to strengthen the technical capacity of staff and their programme management skills.
3. Multi-stakeholder involvement should be enhanced in collecting information for establishing inventories of POPs as well as for introducing alternative technology to phase out their production and use.
4. Facilities for the sound disposal of POPs wastes, for example through incineration, are lacking in the majority of countries in the region. Countries that do not have such facilities can only export them to Europe for environmentally sound disposal. Because the cost of such transport is prohibitive, most

countries store their POPs wastes without the option of disposal in the short or medium term. To overcome this problem, the following measures should be considered:

- a) Optimize national existing waste treatment and disposal initiatives that could be accessed by many countries in the region.
- b) To facilitate the ESM of hazardous wastes, consider reviewing national legislations that ban their import; regional agreements among countries should be established to overcome existing legal and regulatory impediments to cross-boundary movement of hazardous wastes.

Recommendations on PCBs:

1. Increase awareness raising activities regarding the potential risks posed by open applications of PCBs and implement measures to manage PCBs in open applications.
2. Enhance involvement of PCBs holders including the military, the energy sector and the mining sector in PCB management projects. Efforts to involve medium and small size mining operations that do not have appropriate management skills should be increased. Projects should take into consideration that large quantities of equipment contaminated with PCBs occur in the electricity distribution systems of these sectors.
3. Strengthen national capacities and enhance regional cooperation, where possible, in the following areas: PCBs inventories, , identification of PCBs (use of simple kits and laboratory analysis), use of regionally harmonized methodologies for inventories, preparation of action plans, training of customs and other government agencies and prevention of illegal trafficking.

Recommendations on new POPs:

1. The extent of the presence of new POPs in countries in the region is not sufficiently understood; inventories are required to fill this information gap. In addition, awareness raising should be intensified regarding new POPs and potential exposure to such chemicals.
2. There is a need to be able to identify new POPs in articles and products that are imported into countries. The following strategies and measures should be considered:
 - a) Develop the capacity of customs authorities to identify POPs and articles containing POPs, through increasing technical capacity and human resources in customs offices and through collaboration at the regional level.
 - b) Promote information sharing at the regional level and information transfer to countries in the region, regarding techniques for identifying new POPs and their presence in articles.
3. The responsibility for managing new POPs and articles containing new POPs throughout their life cycle should be shared by manufacturers. The following strategies and measures should be considered:
 - a) Companies that produce new POPs and that manufacture articles containing new POPs should facilitate the identification of such articles and the way in which these should be disposed of. Regulations should be introduced to require the labelling of articles for their POPs content and for their environmentally sound disposal.
 - b) Producers of new POPs should provide clear information about these chemicals to allow awareness raising and to facilitate their environmentally sound disposal.
 - c) Mechanisms should be developed for returning articles containing POPs to the manufacturers for their disposal.

- d) Partnerships with and voluntary participation by industry should be encouraged, for example, by including manufacturers in the process of developing regulations.
 - e) Countries should take advantage of existing regional and international platforms, such as the Partnership for Action on Computing Equipment (PACE) of the Basel Convention, for cooperating with industry towards the life-cycle management of articles containing POPs.
4. National and regional strategies on waste of electronic and electrical equipment (e-waste) should encompass approaches to address new POPs contained in electrical and electronic equipment (EEE) and their wastes.
5. There is insufficient awareness about the exposure to POPs, in particular the 9 new POPs. The following strategies and measures should be considered:
- a) Increase the availability of information and awareness raising about the presence of POPs in articles and exposure routes to these substances throughout the life-cycle of such articles.
 - b) Strengthen regulations to increase the protection of workers of the waste disposal and recycling industry, for example e-waste disposal, and to prevent releases of POPs to the environment from that industry.
6. Mechanisms should be implemented for the notification of export and import of wastes of EEE that may contain POPs. They should be enforced by inspection mechanisms to avoid the clandestine trade of e-waste; for example, e-waste is sometimes declared as new when exported from the region in order to circumvent existing notification mechanisms. The following strategies and measures should be considered to promote the development of notification mechanisms:
- a) Exploit synergies among the Rotterdam, the Stockholm and Basel Conventions to achieve this objective.
 - b) A system of harmonized codes for customs already exists as a regional regulation within the Central American region for the 12 “old” POPs; this should be expanded to include the new POPs.
 - c) The Globally Harmonized System of Classification and Labelling of Chemicals (GHS) could be considered for the labelling of new POPs.
7. Legislative and regulatory frameworks need to be updated for managing new POPs and their wastes. This process is expected to be lengthy and management practices should therefore initially be implemented through non-regulatory approaches in coordination with relevant stakeholders.
8. Participating countries have extensive experience in the ESM of POPs, especially PCBs. They should apply knowledge acquired from such experience to the management of new POPs wastes.

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