

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

UNEP Global Treaty on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)

From June 29-July 3, 1998, the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP), together with other relevant international organizations, convened the first session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-1) in Montreal, Canada. John Buccini from Canada was elected as Chairman of the INC process. With 100 countries represented, INC-1 initiated work on the mandate to prepare a legally-binding instrument for implementing international action by the year 2000 on an initial list of twelve POPs: aldrin, chlordane, DDT, dieldrin, dioxins, endrin, furans, heptachlor, hexachlorobenzene, mirex, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and toxaphene. They fall into three categories: pesticides, industrial by-products, and unintended by-products of combustion and industrial processes.

INC-1 considered the program of work for the negotiations and discussed possible elements for inclusion in the global treaty. INC-1 also established two groups: a Criteria Experts Group (CEG), focusing on scientific criteria and a procedure for identifying additional pollutants for possible inclusion under the treaty; and an Implementation Group, focusing on implementation aspects of the future instrument, such as issues related to technical and financial assistance.

The first session of the Criteria Experts Group (CEG-1) met in Bangkok, Thailand, October 26-30, 1998. Approximately 50 countries met to start the process for developing science-based criteria for identifying additional POPs and a process to nominate, screen, and evaluate a substance as a potential POP.

The second session of Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-2) met at the UNEP headquarters in Nairobi, Kenya, January 25-29, 1999, with 104 governments and 55 non-governmental organizations present. The UNEP Secretariat, based on drafting instructions from governments, developed an expanded outline of the treaty text that served as an initial basis for negotiations. At INC-2, the following three groups were working concurrently on treaty text or other issues: the Plenary, where treaty text was discussed and negotiated; the Implementation Group, where capacity building and implementation measures were discussed; and the Contact Group, where the framework was developed for the annexes covering production and use prohibitions for intentionally-produced substances (aldrin, dieldrin, endrin, chlordane, hexachlorobenzene, mirex, toxaphene, DDT, heptachlor, PCBs).

The second session of the Criteria Experts Group (CEG-2) met in Vienna, Austria, June 14-18, 1999, with 60 countries present, to build on the work from CEG-1. The group completed its scientific criteria and process work and submitted the CEG-2 report to the third negotiating session for consideration.

Future negotiations. From September 6-11, 1999, INC-3 will meet in Geneva, Switzerland to continue negotiations. INC-4 is scheduled for Bonn, Germany, March 20-25, 2000. A final negotiating session, INC-5, is tentatively scheduled for November 2000 in South Africa.

For additional information. UNEP has a POPs Home Page at <http://irptc.unep.ch/pops/>. All documents are on that website. The Earth Negotiations Bulletin also provides detailed coverage of the INC and CEG meetings. Their reports are at <http://www.iisd.ca/linkages/chemical/pops2/>.

For public participation. The US Department of State conducts briefings for and solicits input from all interested US stakeholders before and after each negotiating session, and arranges meetings between the US delegation and US stakeholders during negotiations. If you would like to participate, contact Trigg Talley (tel: 202-647-5808, fax: 202-647-5947, e-mail: talleyt@state.gov).