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EXPERT GROUP ON BEST AVAILABLE  
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PRACTICES

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REPORT BY THE SECRETARIAT ON PREPARATORY WORK FOR THE MEETING

Regional workshop for South American countries on best available techniques and best environmental practices in the context of the Stockholm Convention and Basel Convention held from 21 to 24 October 2002 in Buenos Aires, Argentina: summary and conclusions<sup>2</sup>

Subparagraph (a) of Section VI of the terms of reference for the Expert Group on Best Available Techniques and Best Environmental Practices contained in Annex VII of UNEP/POPS/INC.6/22 and Appendix 3 of UNEP/POPS/EGB.1/INF/7 lists as possible reference material for the first session of the Expert Group the proceedings of the regional workshop for South American countries on best available techniques and best environmental practices in the context of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants and Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movement of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal that was subsequently held from 21 to 24 October 2002 in Buenos Aires, Argentina. The workshop was organized by the secretariat of the United Nations Environment Programme (Chemicals) and Secretariat of the Basel Convention. A summary of the workshop including its conclusions is contained in the annex to the present note. The full proceedings of the workshop can be found in UNEP/POPS/EGB.1/INF/6.

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<sup>1</sup> UNEP/POPS/EGB.1/1.

<sup>2</sup> This document has not been formally edited.

Annex

Regional workshop for South American countries on best available techniques and best environmental practices in the context of the Stockholm Convention and Basel Convention held from 21 to 24 October 2002 in Buenos Aires, Argentina

Summary and conclusions

**General Considerations**

There was a general discussion on the main environmental problems that cause the generation of PCDD/F in the region. As an outcome, the following common problems – to be solved through BAT and implemented according to each country's priorities – were identified:

- Untreated wastewater spills to water bodies (sewage, industrial effluents)
- Solid waste, classification and treatment
- Waste incineration, when unavoidable. Best control techniques (emissions, waste feed, operational conditions).
- Capacity building to reconvert to cleaner technologies.
- POPs stockpiles, treatment and destruction (including packaging).
- Within the topic of POPs stockpiles, there is strong concern about PCB contaminated oils (source of PCDD/F; expensive treatment).

Within this context and reflecting the differences among the diverse countries that constitute the South-American region, the importance of cooperation in the following topics was recognized:

- Education, capacity building in general and dissemination of information on POPs, including non-intentional releases and their potential sources.
- Training on monitoring and environmental analytical determinations. Harmonization of analysis protocols (for example, PCBs in oils), inter-laboratory comparative studies. An inventory on the analytical capacities of the region was recommended.
- Cooperation in the field of polluted materials treatment techniques, especially PCBs in oils. The feasibility of local and regional treatment plants (through the coordination of countries and according to current legislation) was discussed as an alternative to the solution of exporting wastes which was seen as highly expensive.

**Priority Actions**

- PCBs and PCDD/F inventories through the application of UNEP's Toolkit (at the moment in different stages of implementation in the diverse countries of the region).
  - There was discussion about the appropriateness of applying OECD countries' emission factors within the region, particularly in the case of vegetal biomass. Some participants suggested that those emission factors might overestimate the contribution from non-contaminated wood. For them, this is consistent with the Canadian experience (x 10 times). The importance of acquiring empirical evidence from South-American biomass was stressed.
- Personnel training.
- Analytical effort.
- Promotion of the public dissemination of the existing information on POPs both from the governmental and industrial sectors.

- National and regional solutions on PCDD/F priorities as well as on POPs ones.

### Sectoral Issues

The Working Group based its discussion on BAT/BEP on an analysis of the principal sources mentioned in the Stockholm Convention. Those sources were discussed beginning with the 4 mandatory ones contained in Annex C, Part II:

- Waste incinerators (including co-incinerators of municipal, hazardous and medical waste or of sewage sludge),
- Cement kilns firing hazardous waste,
- Production of pulp using elemental chlorine or chemicals generating elemental chlorine for bleaching, and
- Metallurgical industry.

Each participant made a brief statement on the existing plans and facilities for each source in his/her country. It was agreed that after the Workshop the participants would make the necessary consultations in their respective countries to provide information to the regional representatives at the BAT/BEP Expert Group (Argentina, Chile, Dominican Republic, Mexico and Venezuela). The application of BAT/BEP will depend on the characteristics and capabilities of each country - taking into account the difficulties that presently affect the region.

1. **Incinerators:** their use for medical waste was recognized as a common problem for the region. The importance of using certain alternative techniques in waste management – for example, segregation – according to the existing conditions in each country was also recognized as a common issue. The unusual practice of incinerating municipal waste was also identified as a regional characteristic in contrast with North America and Europe. The correct segregation of wastes - minimizing the portion destined to incineration - was recommended. It was agreed that the approval of new facilities should fulfill the highest standards to be defined by each country.
2. **Cement kilns firing hazardous waste:** the existence of various facilities within the region was mentioned. Everyone was aware of the need to control them under the current legal environment regulations of each country, especially taking into account that some countries do not enforce adequate emissions control systems. The advantage of controlling the type of waste feeding the system was also recognized, since there is the possibility of generating PCDD/F that could be released and/or be incorporated to a product of ordinary human use.
3. **Production of pulp using elemental chlorine or chemicals generating elemental chlorine for bleaching:** the Working Group referred to the existence of various production and recycling plants utilizing different technologies - from the oldest to the more modern - within the region. It was recognized that some operate with little control other than for conventional parameters. In some countries, the existence of recycling facilities only was mentioned.
4. **Metallurgical industry:** this subject was not thoroughly discussed by the participants.

### Best Environmental Practice

Key points raised were:

- The close link between BAT and BEP. The need of establishing definite strategies as a fundamental part of BAT was also underlined.
- Technological solutions were considered as relatively well known, but their implementation according to the reality of each country was acknowledged as the critical phase (feasibility).
- The importance of designing environmentally sound management plans that especially take into account the reduction of materials with high contents of chlorine in those activities identified as PCDD/F generators was recognized as a relevant issue in the prevention of PCDD/F generation.

- Education, sensitization and economical incentives were recognized as important issues for promoting BAT.
- The case for voluntary agreements and/or the application of environmental management tools and environmental regulations.
- The strengthening of environmental control authorities as a means of achieving an appropriate enforcement of agreements and regulations.
- The promotion of society's participation in the implementation processes of the integrated plans designed within the objectives of the Stockholm Convention.
- The establishment of national mechanisms leading to a progressive decrease of the uncontrolled burning of municipal and agricultural waste
- Potential for BEP to be used as a commercial barrier.
- The difficulties being faced by medium and small enterprises to adopt BAT.
- The lack of regulations on non-intentional POPs management in certain countries.

A list of BAT considered at the fifth preparatory session of the Stockholm Convention INC was presented, and although some points were raised by participants, it could not be thoroughly discussed. It was agreed that further analysis by the participating countries was necessary in order to provide an input to the BAT/BEP Expert Group's first meeting in March 2003.

#### **Further Issues**

The Working Group drew attentions to a lack of correspondence between the English and Spanish versions of the Stockholm Convention's article 5 (five) and/or Annex C - corresponding to BAT/BEP, and requested Argentina to raise the issue with the Secretariat.