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INTERGOVERNMENTAL NEGOTIATING COMMITTEE FOR AN
INTERNATIONAL LEGALLY BINDING INSTRUMENT
FOR IMPLEMENTING INTERNATIONAL ACTION ON
CERTAIN PERSISTENT ORGANIC POLLUTANTS

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Item 5 of the provisional agenda*

Preparations for the Conference of the Parties

**SUBREGIONAL AND INTERREGIONAL WORKSHOPS TO SUPPORT THE
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STOCKHOLM CONVENTION**

Note by the secretariat

1. Within the framework of the UNEP Chemicals capacity-building programme to provide support to developing countries in strengthening their national chemicals management programmes in connection with their implementation and ratification of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, a series of 10 sub- and interregional workshops were held between September 2001 and April 2003. The workshops were held in Accra, Ghana; Manama, Bahrain; Bangkok, Thailand; Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso; Montevideo, Uruguay; Bratislava, Slovak Republic; Port of Spain, Trinidad and Tobago; Kyiv, Ukraine; Livingstone, Zambia; and St. John's, Antigua. Nine of them were funded under a Global Environment Facility Medium-Sized Project, with co-funding from Canada, Sweden and Switzerland. A total of 141 countries participated in one or more of the workshops.
2. Many of the workshops were organized in collaboration with the appropriate Regional Training and Technology Transfer Centres established under the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and Their Disposal, providing an opportunity for improved control of coordination and synergies between chemicals-related conventions at national and subregional levels
3. The aim of the workshops was to improve understanding of the Stockholm Convention, the benefits of becoming a Party and the need to do so, the nature of the problems caused by persistent organic pollutants and countries' obligations under the Convention to encourage and facilitate the early ratification of the Stockholm Convention itself and related conventions such as the Basel Convention and the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in

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International Trade. The workshops were intended also to facilitate eligible countries' access to Global Environment Facility resources for enabling activities, to help Governments begin the process of developing national implementation plans and other implementation or enabling activities under the Convention, and to encourage cooperative partnerships between sectors and stakeholders. Participants were from relevant Government Ministries and agencies and also from intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations.

4. Each workshop began with a series of overview presentations on the Stockholm, Basel and Rotterdam Conventions that were followed by presentations from countries on their current situations with regard to persistent organic pollutants. Obligations under the Stockholm Convention in respect of intentionally produced persistent organic pollutants, unintentionally produced persistent organic pollutants, and stockpiles and wastes, together with general issues, were presented in some detail, as was the Global Environment Facility and its role as the principal entity within the interim financial mechanism for the Stockholm Convention. Also, working groups were held to discuss the questions of intentionally produced persistent organic pollutants, unintentionally produced persistent organic pollutants and the financial mechanism.

5. In the 18 months between the first and the last workshops, many developing countries identified and nominated their Stockholm Convention National Focal Points and most selected implementing agencies to assist them in developing of their national implementation plans. The increasing tempo of country activities such as signing, ratifying or acceding to the Stockholm Convention, together with the growing number of national implementation plans, their degree of development and the enhanced understanding of the Global Environment Facility, shows that the objectives of the workshops have been met and that they were instrumental in helping Governments implement the Convention and make key decisions on how best to meet their obligations under it.

6. The workshops highlighted problems encountered by countries and identified specific needs. Many problems were common to all regions. Topics such as adequate legislation, available expertise, risk communication, public awareness and education, financial resources, local habits and political will and commitment were noted as critical.

7. Also, the workshops provided countries with an opportunity to discuss critical issues in their own regions with respect to the Convention, and gave them a forum in which to seek assistance from the Global Environment Facility and other implementing agencies. At the same time they created new opportunities for regional networks and strengthened existing regional cooperation. Countries expressed deep interest in working together more closely and in exchanging information, with possible transfers of technology and expertise when available.

8. It is clear from the workshops that countries are taking steps to address the problems of persistent organic pollutants, but more needs to be done. In confronting their problems, countries stressed the need for support in developing new legislation and harmonizing existing legislation to address persistent organic pollutants and substances covered by other, related conventions such as the Basel and Rotterdam Conventions. Countries also required assistance with training personnel and officials in enforcement, transport, labelling and handling procedures and other activities, and with capacity-building to strengthen national institutions and existing infrastructure for national implementation plan development and monitoring programmes.

9. Some suggestions were made on future activities for UNEP and others to consider:

(a) Encouraging greater subregional and regional cooperation in the implementation of national implementation plans;

(b) Developing legal and institutional frameworks for the effective management by countries of persistent organic pollutants;

- (c) Encouraging active involvement by countries in activities such as the joint UNEP/United States Environmental Protection Agency Chemicals Information Exchange Network project, the UNEP Chemicals POPs Global Monitoring Programme and the multi-organization African Stockpile Programme;
- (d) Promoting research into the use of alternatives and encouraging technology transfers;
- (e) Conducting follow-up workshops aimed at enhancing monitoring mechanisms and enforcement capacity.

10. All workshop proceedings have been published in English and in the major language of the subregion involved and are available both in hard copy and on the Stockholm Convention web site www.pops.int. They are available also on CD-ROM together with relevant background documents such as the Stockholm, Basel and Rotterdam Conventions, the Global Environment Facility Initial Guidelines for Enabling Activities in official languages and the draft in English of the document containing interim guidance for developing national implementation plans for the Stockholm Convention. Also, an overview of outcomes summarizing the discussions in the working groups from all the workshops is available as a separate publication.
