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

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Item 3 of the provisional agenda*

Review of ongoing international activities relating to the work of the Committee

**WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION PROGRESS REPORT ON ACTIVITIES RELATED TO
THE REDUCTION AND/OR ELIMINATION OF PERSISTENT ORGANIC POLLUTANTS**

Note by the secretariat

Attached to the present note is information on activities of the World Health Organization related to the reduction and/or elimination of persistent organic pollutants. This information was provided by the secretariat of the World Health Organization and has not been formally edited.

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WHO PROGRESS REPORT
ON ACTIVITIES RELATED TO

**THE REDUCTION AND/OR
ELIMINATION OF PERSISTENT
ORGANIC POLLUTANTS**

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WHO PROGRESS REPORT ON ACTIVITIES RELATED TO THE REDUCTION AND/OR ELIMINATION OF PERSISTENT ORGANIC POLLUTANTS

Submission of the World Health Organization
to the 7th Session of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee
of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Geneva, 14 – 18 July, 2003)

1. WHO policy and programmes

World Health Organization has strengthened and accelerated its work towards the goals set by the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs). Collaboration with UNEP has been enhanced, with increased joint planning and implementation of activities at the global, regional and country level. The Convention continues to be actively promoted in all WHO Regions, and its implication on disease vector control has been the subject of a number of workshops, and advocacy and consultative meetings.

The number of request for guidance on DDT from Member States has increased. Requests have ranged from explaining WHO policy and recommendations on the use of DDT in disease vector control, to more elaborate technical discussions/guidance sessions. WHO participated in a number of national consultative meetings on DDT.

A number of States have communicated the intention to evaluate a possible role of DDT in their national malaria vector control programmes. Policy and technical guidance is being provided consistent with the goals of the Stockholm Convention and the World Health Assembly Resolution WHA50.13 on the Promotion of chemical safety, with special attention to persistent organic pollutants. WHO efforts continue to be guided by the recommendations of the WHO Study Group¹, and the WHO Expert Committee on Malaria.²

2. Progress in POPs-related activities in general

The **International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS)** is facilitating the involvement of poisons centres in relevant activities in support of the Stockholm Convention. Poisons centres have the potential to contribute towards the collection of information on the numbers of exposures to POPs and the resulting health effects. Poison centers are also able to detect sentinel events that might provide an indication of the effectiveness or otherwise of measures to control DDT exposure. This sentinel role was recognized at a UNEP/GEF thematic workshop on Health and

¹ *Vector control for malaria and other mosquito-borne diseases. Report of a WHO Study Group.* Geneva, World Health Organization, 1995 (WHO Technical Report Series No. 857).

² *Twentieth report of the WHO Expert Committee on Malaria.* Geneva, World Health Organization, 2000 (WHO Technical Report Series No. 892).

Environment for the finalization of the environment initiative for NEPAD (the New Partnership for Africa's Development).

Poison information monographs (PIMs) on POP chemicals are progressively being updated and included in the INCHEM and INTOX databases available on CD and also accessible free-of-charge on the web at www.inchem.org and www.intox.org.

The IPCS project on the Epidemiology of Pesticide Poisoning - a Harmonized Collection of Human Data, is continuing. The project aims to estimate the extent of human exposure and poisoning by pesticides in selected regions or countries.

The WHO joint project with the EU on risk assessment of non-dioxin-like PCBs in food is continuing. An expert meeting to evaluate and further develop the current rapid assay methodology for dioxins and PCBs was held in February 2003.

The **Water, Sanitation and Health programme** has established Guidelines for Drinking-Water Quality (GDWQ), which includes guideline values representing the concentration of constituents that do not result in any significant risk to the health of the consumer over a lifetime of consumption. Guideline values are or will be given to some POPs, such as aldrin, dieldrin, chlordane, DDT and endrin in the current and upcoming third edition of the GDWQ. DDT will be retained in the third edition of GDWQ. The guidelines also include values for larvicides in drinking water and urge efforts to keep their concentration as low as possible.

3. Progress in the implementation of the WHO action plan for the reduction of reliance on DDT in disease vector control

There have been a number of significant achievements towards the objectives of the *WHO Action Plan for the Reduction of Reliance on DDT in disease vector control*.

3.1 Country needs assessment

Guidelines on vector control needs assessment have been pre-tested in selected countries in Africa, to assist adaptation to the regional context. Field-testing will also be conducted in other non-African countries in the second half of 2003. The guidelines provide a framework for the development of national action plans on vector control, which is based on a structured consultative process involving all stakeholders. The consultative process on vector control will also build on national processes for the development of the broader National Implementation Plans (NIPs) on POPs.

Good progress has been made on the project to support six countries in Southern African (Eritrea, Ethiopia, Madagascar, Namibia, South Africa and Swaziland) to reduce reliance on DDT for malaria control and facilitate transition to cost-effective, sustainable and environmentally sound control options. A Project Preparation and Development Facility (PDF-B) was approved by the Global Environment Facility (GEF), the interim financial mechanisms for the implementation of the Convention. Activities are currently under way to develop the final project protocol to be completed by the end of July 2003. The project is being implemented under the auspices of WHO. WHO is collaborating with UNEP to expand this project to cover countries presently at risk of reverting to DDT use. Efforts are also under way to initiate similar projects in other WHO Regions.

3.2 Development and implementation of alternative methods and approaches

3.2.1 Availability of pesticides

There is a need for urgent action to reverse the dwindling number of public health insecticide alternatives to DDT. Factors contributing to the reduction in available alternatives, include a lack of new introductions for over 15 years, increasing vector resistance to existing insecticides, restrictions imposed by regulatory agencies due to safety concerns, and withdrawal of insecticides no longer registered for public health use. Indeed, insecticides used for vector-borne diseases affecting humans, are primarily spin-offs from the agriculture and animal industries.

A number of options exist for addressing this growing challenge. This includes the judicious and selective application of existing insecticides, as well as the implementation of resistance management strategies to ensure continued effectiveness of available insecticides (increase their useful life); increasing the options for effective non-chemical alternatives; and the development of new classes of insecticides.

While there are ongoing efforts in implementing the first two options, there has been comparatively little effort to develop new public health pesticides. In recognition of the growing problem, WHO has initiated activities under the **Pesticides Evaluation Scheme** (WHOPES) in this direction. These include the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine/Gates Malaria Programme, and collaboration with pesticide industry through GCDPP (Global Collaboration for Development of Pesticides for Public Health) for the submission of new insecticide active ingredients and formulations for the development of alternative insecticides and application technologies for malaria vector control.

To build on the above activities, WHO and UNEP have initiated joint efforts to further explore opportunities for a proactive mobilization of global action for new insecticide alternatives, to accelerate sustainable reduction of the reliance on, and the ultimate withdrawal of DDT.

3.2.2 Integrated vector management

WHO is actively promoting integrated vector management (IVM) among its Member States to maximize the use of different and appropriate control options. Effective IVM implementation is key to reducing the reliance on DDT in particular and pesticides in general. Sixteen countries in Africa are being supported in the development and implementation of national action plans for IVM. These countries have already benefited from staff training on IVM, and have also developed strategic plans. Many of the supported countries are at risk of reverting to, or initiating the use of DDT for malaria vector control.

As part of promotional activities, WHO organized a meeting in January 2003, to formalize an IVM Partnership in Africa. The partnership includes countries and international and regional organizations/institutions. The partners agreed on a framework to coordinate action for IVM, identified priority actions at national and international levels, and explored opportunities for mobilizing resources for the priority actions.

A Strategic Framework for IVM was finalized in consultation with Member States for the Eastern Mediterranean. A training manual on the implementation of IVM has been published³ and also translated into Arabic. A manual on the use of fish for mosquito control⁴ has also been published to further promote the use of non-chemical alternatives. Although the Eastern Mediterranean has successfully shifted to the use of synthetic pyrethroids and insecticide treated nets, there is still a great potential for countries to revert to DDT should the choices for other insecticides become limited or other insecticides rendered ineffective due to development of resistance. Five of the 23 countries (Yemen, Sudan, Morocco, Iran and Saudi Arabia) have however requested exemption, one of which has communicated to WHO its intention to use DDT.

3.2.3 Insecticides treated nets

WHO, together with the Roll Back Malaria (RBM) Partnership, is accelerating the promotion of insecticide-treated nets (ITNs) in several malaria endemic countries. Promotional and dissemination strategies have been developed and a number of guidance materials have been published:

A strategic framework for co-ordinating national action for scaling-up insecticide-treated netting programmes in Africa has been published as a RBM document in both English and French⁵. A CD-ROM version of the document has also been produced. The framework is being adapted for implementation among the countries in the Eastern Mediterranean, and support is being provided to develop and finalize national ITN strategic plans.

A manual for national control programme managers on specific aspects and approaches of ITN interventions has been published and is currently being promoted and disseminated⁶. A WHO document on the treatment and use of insecticide-treated mosquito nets⁷ has been translated into Arabic.

A strategic framework for collaboration with the Expanded Programme on Immunization (EPI) is currently under development, with a view to integrate and promote synergies between different health delivery and promotion options. The framework will include studies on potential delivery mechanisms for ITNs in selected countries relating to antenatal clinics and EPI.

With the encouragement of WHO, a technique for long lasting insecticidal nets (LLINs) has been developed. Using this novel technique, the insecticide treated nets retain the capacity to kill or repel mosquitoes for up to five years. There is a huge potential need for the LLINs in Africa, South-east Asia and South America. WHO, is facilitating the transfer of this technology to enable the production of low cost LLINs in Africa and made widely available.

³ *Training Manual on Integrated Vector Management in Eastern Mediterranean Region*. WHO-EM/MAL/282/E/G

⁴ *Use of fish for mosquito control*- WHO-EM/MAL/289/E/G

⁵ *Scaling-Up Insecticide-Treated Netting Programmes in Africa*. WHO/CDS/RBM/2002.43

⁶ *Insecticide-treated mosquito net interventions. A Manual for National Control Programme managers*. WHO/CDS/RBM/2002.45

⁷ *Instructions for treatment and use of insecticide-treated mosquito nets*. WHO/CDS/RBM/2002.41

3.3 Management of public health pesticides and disposal of obsolete stocks

Several activities are being carried out to improve the capacity of Member States for the effective management of public health pesticides.

3.3.1 Management of public health pesticides

WHO has initiated data collection on current pesticides management practices in public health from Member States. A manual on decision making criteria and procedures for judicious use of insecticides in malaria vector control has been published⁸, and training manuals are being finalized for use at national levels for training managers of vector control programmes. WHO has also drafted guidelines on the management of public health pesticides⁹ and is exploring opportunities to support Member States in adapting and adopting the guidelines and to develop national policies and guidelines on appropriate management of these chemicals. Efforts supporting country capacity building for effective regulation of public health pesticides to eliminate non-recommended/illegal use are ongoing.

3.3.2 Quality of public health pesticides

A primary area of concern is the quality of pesticides available for public health use, since it is directly linked to human and environmental safety, as well as the effectiveness of vector control. WHO has established a joint programme with FAO (i.e. *Joint Meeting on Pesticide Specification*) and has developed a harmonized and unique procedure and guidelines on the development of specifications for pesticides. WHO designated Collaborating Centres for Quality Control of Pesticides are also being expanded and strengthened to support country assessment of the quality of pesticides for public health use.

3.3.3 Disposal of obsolete stockpiles

WHO is collaborating closely with UNEP and FAO to enhance global efforts on the elimination of stockpiles of DDT and other public health pesticides. Priority actions will include a comprehensive evaluation of the extent of the problem and country capacity building for the development and implementation of sustainable disposal strategies.

3.4 Monitoring

Global monitoring of the use of pesticide in vector control continues to be strengthened. Data collection processes of WHO have been improved and the next report on the global use of insecticides in vector control in 2001-02 is expected to be available at the end of 2003.

⁸ Najera, JA and Zaim M. 2002. Malaria Vector Control. Decision making criteria and procedures for judicious use of insecticides. Geneva, World Health Organization, Document WHO/CDS/WHOPES/2002.5.

⁹ Guidelines on the management of public health pesticides, Report of the WHO Interregional Consultation, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 25-28 February 2003. Geneva, World Health Organization, Document WHO/CDS/WHOPES/2003.7.

Support to countries for insecticide resistance monitoring has been strengthened, with the establishment of a network of experts and laboratories in the WHO Regions, as well as the provision of supplies for monitoring insecticide resistance.

In response to the Decisions of INC-6, WHO, in collaboration with the interim Secretariat of the Stockholm Convention, has developed a report on the guidance and information needed for the evaluation of the continued need for DDT in vector control. Additionally, a proposal has been made on a possible format for reporting by Parties that use DDT on the amounts used, conditions of use and the relevance of DDT to disease management strategies. These documents are being submitted for the consideration of INC-7, following which the reporting and evaluation mechanisms for DDT will be field-tested and finalized by the end of 2003.

3.5 Advocacy

Advocacy on the implications of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants on the use of DDT for malaria vector control has been significantly accelerated through a number of meetings, workshops as well as direct consultations with policy makers. Joint WHO-UNEP sub-regional workshops on the reduction/elimination & management of pesticides in the context of the Stockholm Convention, have been held for Southern and Eastern Africa under the auspices of WHO. Similar workshops are planned for the Eastern Mediterranean and the South-east Asia. Additionally, WHO has made a number of presentations in various international fora on the Stockholm Convention and the implications and opportunities for disease vector control.

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