

**Fourth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm
Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants**

High-level Segment

“Meeting the Challenges of a POPs-free Future”

Geneva, 4-8 May 2009

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Mr. President, Distinguished Vice President, Honorable
Ministers, Delegates,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome all participants to this the fourth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention.

Let us be reminded, Ladies and Gentlemen, of the Stockholm Convention's purpose. This global treaty is designed to protect human health and the environment from highly dangerous, long-lasting chemicals by restricting and ultimately eliminating their production, use, trade, release and disposal.

During the high-level segment, debate will centre around 'meeting the challenges of a POPs-free future', a four-point agenda to address the key challenges posed by chemicals-

related issues in the context of minimizing the effect of chemicals on human health and the environment

This focus is intended to address how meeting the challenges of a POPs-free future can play a major part in minimizing human suffering and the global cost of responding to the human health and environmental problems caused by POPs. This is particularly important to vulnerable populations which suffer the most exposure.

There are four distinct challenges:

- **Challenge #1:** moving away from the production and use of POPs towards safer alternatives and to reach the goal of eliminating the release of unintentionally produced POPs.
- **Challenge #2:** identifying new POPs that put human health and environment at risk.

- **Challenge #3:** ensuring that technical and financial resources are made available for all countries to meet their obligations under the Convention.
- **Challenge #4:** continuing to ensure the Convention meets its goal of protecting human health and the environment from POPs.

The Stockholm Convention entered into force in May 2004. From that date the efforts towards its implementation has centered on the preparatory activities which would enable Parties to implement the agreement fully. The Convention has now entered into a new phase where the emphasis has been shifted to implementation of identified activities necessary to protect the health of the world's population and its environment. This change in the emphasis of the Convention will greatly help in overcoming the challenges identified.

The 20th century led to the invention and worldwide use of thousands of chemicals in agriculture and industry. Today, chemicals have a truly international reach. Their global footprint has accumulated in almost every living thing, including human beings. POPs are of special concern.

POPs are in our homes, in the air we breathe, in the water we drink and the food we eat. They can be found in pesticides, paint additives, heat exchange fluids, transformers, sealants and plastics. They are in the waste of industries and hospitals. Some are also released as unintended by-products of combustion and industrial processes.

Although these chemicals have contributed to our general well-being, exposure to them can also cause serious health problems. POPs remain intact in the environment for long periods. They gradually accumulate in the fatty tissue of living organisms, and can cause cancer and birth defects.

POPs may also disrupt immune and reproductive systems and even diminish intelligence.

This meeting marks a new chapter in the history of the Stockholm Convention. Under your leadership, we have an opportunity, where meaningful action can be taken to meet the challenges of a POPs-free future. For the first time, nine new chemicals are proposed for listing under the Convention. This is a sign of true progress in the sound management of chemicals worldwide.

During this COP Parties have been able to reach agreement on the framework for closer cooperation between the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions which awaits your formal adoption. This is a milestone in the global effort to achieve better environmental management. All Parties should feel justifiably proud of this accomplishment. The Stockholm Convention Secretariat is ready to move immediately to implement the provisions of this decision.

However, this alone will not mark a major success for our deliberations this week at the Conference of the Parties. It is equally important to make progress on all aspects of the scope of the Convention including:

1. Provision for Technical Assistance
2. Input to the replenishment of the GEF operating as the Principal Entity under the Financial Mechanism
3. Guidance to the Financial Mechanism on priorities for funding under the Convention.
4. The listing of new chemicals in the annexes of the Convention
5. A Non-Compliance mechanism
6. The Effectiveness evaluation of the convention
7. The establishment of Regional Centers that can provide added value to Parties in their implementation of the Convention

8. A budget which achieves the objectives of the Convention and respects the financial limitations of Parties.

Honorable Ministers, Distinguished Delegates, the Stockholm Secretariat has forged a stronger and more active working relationship with UNEP. This has enabled greater access to the resources of our parent UN agency and translated into many more cooperative programs and a greater level and quality of delivery of activities to our Parties. This relationship will continue to grow drawing from the expertise of both organizations.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF) Secretariat has worked closely and consultatively with the Convention Secretariat. The level of cooperation between the two agencies is an example for all to follow. I wish to thank the GEF Secretariat for continuing to work closely with the

Stockholm Convention Secretariat resulting in enhanced benefits for the Parties.

The Secretariat has developed a special working relationship with the World Health Organization which has been very successful in addressing the issue of DDT and malaria control. We look forward to implementing any further decisions the Parties may take on furthering this key objective of the Convention with the WHO as a key partner.

Distinguished Delegates, as the High-Level Segment of this fourth Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants opens, we are presented with a clear message - without meeting the challenges of a POPs-free future, the global effort to minimize the impact of chemicals on human health and the environment will fail, and without the development of such a sustainable future, supported by a green economy, our fragile planet will face a precarious future. I look forward to

productive debate and to hearing about potential solutions that will enable us to better meet the challenges of a POPs-free future.

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