

Ambassador Cameron Munter
Video Statement for Press Conference
During the Sixteenth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP XVI)
Cancun, Mexico

Greetings from Islamabad, Pakistan!

Thank you for the opportunity to participate in today's press conference in Cancun; I am delighted to be a part of such an important event. Let me thank Mr. Donald Cooper in particular for convening this discussion and inviting me to speak.

I am honored to be included – albeit digitally – among the experts assembled in Cancun who care about Pakistan's future, and the future of all of us who share planet Earth. We have come together to consider the implications of a global study analyzing the linkage between climate change and increased danger to human health from persistent organic pollutants, or POPs [*pron. "pops"*]

As this study points out, changes in ocean currents and world temperatures contribute to a higher frequency of storm events. These events in turn impact the world's overall flooding patterns. Floods and other natural disasters can quickly defeat existing infrastructure and release dangerous and obsolete pesticides into the environment where people and animals are directly exposed. This is bad news for us all.

The heavy monsoon flooding in Pakistan this year was an unprecedented natural disaster. Over 20 million Pakistanis were affected and 1.6 million families suffered major disruptions to their homes and livelihoods. The United States contributed over 600 million dollars to flood relief efforts, and provided airlift support to assist the Pakistani government in rescuing and delivering essential emergency supplies to hundreds of thousands.

And now that the waters have receded, the U.S. and Pakistan are working together to help flood victims rebuild their lives and livelihoods. We are also working together to prevent further damage from POPs.

The United States is committed to working in Pakistan, and around the world, to improve the management of banned and obsolete agricultural pesticides and reduce their impact on the environment and public health.

This year, the United States and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization – or FAO – office in Islamabad entered into an agreement to build national pesticide management capacity in Pakistan. This program will provide training to government officials to improve chemical safety and security. Many countries share Pakistan's challenges with regard to obsolete agricultural pesticides, and the lessons learned through this project will be valuable worldwide.

This project is just one example of how the United States is partnering with Pakistan and other nations around the world to protect the environment and promote sustainable agricultural development.

Today's press conference is an excellent opportunity to raise awareness about the impact of climate change and POPs on the health and livelihoods of communities everywhere. Thank you for this opportunity to highlight how the United States is working with Pakistan to reduce the risk of persistent organic pollutants to the environment. And thank you all for your commitment to addressing the impact of climate change on us all.