



World Federation of Public Health Associations
Fédération mondiale des associations de santé publique
Federación mundial de las asociaciones de salud pública

Support for International Action to Eliminate Persistent Organic Pollutants

Passed by the WFPHA General Assembly - 2001

The World Federation of Public Health Associations,

Recognizing that persistent organic pollutants, or POPs, are transported globally, persist in the environment, bioaccumulate and biomagnify in food chains, and build up in the body fat of humans and animals,

Noting, as did the WFPHA in 1996, that many POPs are known to adversely affect human and animal reproduction; growth and development; immune function; neurological function; and are known or suspected to cause various cancers,

Understanding further that these effects may be seen at levels similar to those already present in the environment, to which developing fetuses and young children are especially vulnerable,

Recognizing that protecting human health and the environment from POPs cannot be accomplished by national regulatory actions alone, but rather requires a global commitment to reduce and ultimately eliminate them,

Observing that international negotiations toward a global POPs Convention are concluded, and negotiators of over 110 countries expect a formal signing ceremony in May of this year,

Recognizing that sufficient evidence of human and eco-toxicity exists for twelve POPs - aldrin, chlordane, DDT, dieldrin, dioxins, endrin, furans, heptachlor, hexachlorobenzene, mirex, PCBs, and toxaphene and that the Intergovernmental Forum for Chemical Safety has targeted these for immediate action under the global Convention,

Understanding that a number of additional POPs may pose similar but less well-documented threats to the environment and human health,

Appreciating that scientific certainty about the toxicity of some POPs may be impossible to achieve, particularly for those POPs beyond the initial list of twelve, but that additional study is nonetheless needed,

Noting that the precautionary principle, as outlined in the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992) states that "where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack



World Federation of Public Health Associations
Fédération mondiale des associations de santé publique
Federación mundial de las asociaciones de salud pública

of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation,"

Acknowledging that the successful elimination of POPs will require the development and implementation of safer, more sustainable alternative products, processes, and materials, many of which already exist,

Recognizing, that pollution prevention is the most effective means of reducing and eliminating the formation and release of POPs, such as dioxins and furans, that are by-products of human industry,

Remembering that Health Care Institutions are a significant source of POPs contamination: Understanding that the disposal of stockpiled POPs and POPs-contaminated soils by some methods, including high temperature incineration, may itself lead to the formation and release of POPs,

Recognizing that developing countries and economies in transition are in many cases severely contaminated by POPs, yet these same countries are without the necessary infrastructure to effectively implement commitments made under a POPs elimination Convention, including the environmentally sound disposal of POPs stockpiles and the replacement of POPs and POPs-producing technologies with safer alternatives,

Therefore, the World Federation of Public Health Associations:

URGES all member associations to call upon their governments and others to sign the negotiated POPs Convention;

ASSERTS that POPs are inherently unmanageable substances and that the ultimate goal for the global Convention is the elimination of POPs and their significant anthropogenic sources, where feasible and as soon as possible,

SUPPORTS immediate global action under the Convention to eliminate the use and production of aldrin, chlordane, dieldrin, endrin, heptachlor, hexachlorobenzene, mirex, and toxaphene,

RECOMMENDS an immediate end to the production and use of new PCBs, and a phase-out of existing PCBs in use within a reasonable time frame,

URGES reductions in the production and use of DDT as much as possible without compromise to human health, with the ultimate aim of a complete phase-out, and that the Convention work closely with the World Health Organization to develop and implement safer, cost-effective



World Federation of Public Health Associations
Fédération mondiale des associations de santé publique
Federación mundial de las asociaciones de salud pública

alternatives for malaria control while supporting the concept of current exemptions for countries requiring DDT for malaria control,

STRONGLY ENCOURAGES a pollution prevention approach to dioxins, furans, and other by-product POPs, emphasizing the use of alternative products, processes, and materials as source elimination strategies, with the ultimate aim of eliminating all significant anthropogenic sources and releases of POPs by-products,

SPECIFICALLY RECOMMENDS that Health Care Institutions examine their purchasing, recycling, and waste disposal practices to reduce, with a goal of ultimate elimination, of POP generation from their facilities without compromise to patient care:

SUPPORTS the destruction of POPs stockpiles by means that do not themselves generate POPs, and that it mandate measures to address POP contaminated soils, sediments and other environmental reservoirs,

URGES that POPs, once their production and use is banned, should not be traded, except perhaps for the purpose of their environmentally sound destruction, and that the POPs Convention must not be subordinated to international trade rules,

RECOMMENDS that all POPs, once identified for action under the Convention, be slated for eventual elimination, and that the Convention employ country-specific and use-specific exemptions to address countries' special needs during phase-out periods,

URGES that additional chemicals be identified for elimination using science-based criteria, including their capacity for long-range transport, persistence, bioaccumulation, and toxicity, and that the thresholds set for numeric criteria should allow for the capture of significant POPs of concern,

RECOMMENDS aggressive programs of toxicity testing directed to the many chemicals whose toxic effects remain unknown, evaluating these chemicals both individually and in combination, and addressing the broad range of relevant health outcomes, including carcinogenicity and mutagenicity, endocrine activity, and developmental, immune, neurological, and reproductive toxicity,

URGES that developed nations provide technical assistance and funding to less developed nations directly, through multilateral agreements, and through existing financial assistance mechanisms such as the Global Environment Facility, to support the elimination of POPs, including support for the implementation of alternative means of malaria vector and disease control,



World Federation of Public Health Associations
Fédération mondiale des associations de santé publique
Federación mundial de las asociaciones de salud pública

SUPPORTS the principles of just transition, protecting the livelihoods of workers and communities affected by the elimination of POPs, and

URGES careful attention to the occupational health of workers engaged in the elimination of POPs.