



United Nations Environment Programme

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Workshop on continuing PCB management in Latin American and Caribbean countries

11 and 12 February 2008
Panama City, Panama

Background

1. In its decision 23/9 I, the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) requested the Executive Director of UNEP to strengthen support, within available resources, for the Basel Convention on the Control of Transboundary Movements of Hazardous Wastes and their Disposal, the Rotterdam Convention on the Prior Informed Consent Procedure for Certain Hazardous Chemicals and Pesticides in International Trade and the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. It further requested the Executive Director to promote cooperation and synergies between the secretariats of those conventions and, among others, the Chemicals Branch of the UNEP Division of Technology, Industry and Economics.
2. Part II of Annex A of the Stockholm Convention deals exclusively with polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs). Together with Articles 3 and 6 of the Convention, it indicates, among other things, that each Party to the Convention shall:
 - (a) Make determined efforts to eliminate the use of PCBs in equipment by 2025;
 - (b) Make determined efforts designed to lead to the environmentally sound waste management of liquids containing PCBs and equipment contaminated with PCBs having a PCB content above 0.005 per cent no later than 2028;
 - (c) Endeavor to identify other articles containing more than 0.005 per cent PCBs and manage them in accordance with paragraph 1 of Article 6 of the Convention.
3. As a general observation, measures taken to date to identify and remediate PCBs in the Latin American and Caribbean region have revealed that Parties face significant obstacles in their efforts to meet their obligations under the Convention. Consistent difficulties have been observed in developing complete and accurate inventories and in establishing infrastructures to address all aspects of PCBs and PCB-containing wastes such as analysis, handling, transport, storage and disposal. Parties' national implementation plans and national action plans have in some cases highlighted priority sectors (e.g. mining, electrical distribution) which hold a considerable percentage of the PCBs in-country.

I. Objectives

4. The workshop will focus on addressing the needs identified through the regional national implementation plans generated under the Stockholm Convention, the national action plans on PCBs produced during implementation of the project "Preparation of National Inventories and National Plans for the Environmentally Sound Management of PCBs and PCB-containing Equipment in Central America" (hereinafter referred to as the CA PCB project), feedback from participants in the First Consultative Meeting on PCB Management (2004, Geneva) and other sources.

5. The workshop will also allow an assessment of follow-up activities from the CA PCB project, as well as other PCB control and remediation actions by regional actors. Specifically, the workshop will be built around moderated question and answer sessions in three general areas relative to PCB issues:

- (a) Legislative and institutional measures necessary to ensure a sound framework when addressing PCB problems and management;
- (b) Identifying the problems: PCB inventory efforts and subsequent management planning;
- (c) Handling the problems: Enacting PCB management plans; identifying requirements associated with the elimination of PCBs (e.g., handling, transport, storage, disposal).

A. Legislative and institutional requirements

6. The development of legal instruments and institutional capabilities for the management of PCB-related wastes, persistent organic pollutants and hazardous wastes in general is one of the identified difficulties in developing countries and countries with economies in transition.

7. The current workshop will directly precede the Workshop on Development of Legal and Institutional Infrastructures on Sound Management of Chemicals and a regional meeting on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management SAICM, and should thus benefit both from cross-attendee participation as well as materials prepared for those events.

B. PCB inventory efforts and management planning

8. The national implementation plans and previous national PCB inventories for the region have exhibited a wide range of methodologies employed and assumptions made, as well as a wide range of results (equipment coverage, ability to identify equipment and equipment owners, access for sampling, etc.). The performance of a PCB inventory on a national scale requires a significant and well-coordinated effort. The many inventory attempts in the region represent a valuable pool of experience on the effectiveness of various inventory practices. The session will highlight past experiences and aim to identify best practices and common assumptions for future inventory work.

C. Enacting PCB management plans

9. Once PCBs have been identified, their elimination requires a developed infrastructure capable of meeting their special handling needs.

10. A workshop session will build on management efforts already under way in the region. Questions will be posed designed to elicit best practices applying to the various stages of PCB management, including handling, packaging, transport, storage, final disposal and other matters.

II. Structure

11. The workshop will consist of seven sessions structured around the workshop's objectives. Several of these will be participatory "workshop" sessions on legislative and institutional infrastructure, PCB management at the inventory stage and PCB management at the operational stage. The seven sessions will focus on:

Session 1: Workshop opening, keynote speeches, PCBs and obligations under the Basel and Stockholm Conventions

Session 2: Country summaries of PCB remediation status; presentation on the CA PCB project

Session 3: Workshop session: inventorying and planning of phase-out operations

Session 4: Workshop session: operations phase of remediation

Session 5: Technology options: presentation on PCB disposal and treatment technologies

Session 6: Workshop session: legislative and institutional requirements for effective PCB management

Session 7: GEF implementing agency activities, partner organizations

III. Expected outcomes

12. The proceedings of the workshop will be published. They will summarize the main discussions, give an account of the presentations made and highlight the participant's conclusions and recommendations.

13. Identification of further opportunities for UNEP Chemicals' involvement in regional PCB-related activities, both with national institutions and bilateral funding organizations, is anticipated. Inclusion in and synergies with regional PCB projects under development or in their early stages would also be sought.

IV. Workshop details

A. Date and venue

14. The workshop will take place on 11 and 12 February 2008 in Panama City, Panama. The venue has not yet been determined and will be announced on the event website:

http://www.chem.unep.ch/pops/pcb_activities/Panama2008/default.htm. As noted above, the workshop will immediately precede the UNEP Chemicals Workshop on Development of Legal and Institutional Infrastructures on Sound Management of Chemicals and a regional meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean on the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management.

B. Target participants

15. *Government institutions* The appropriate Stockholm Convention focal points will be invited to nominate a supported participant to the workshop. Such participants should have knowledge of their countries' PCB efforts and a suitable technical background.

16. *PCB service industry* Given the limited space on the agenda, presentations by PCB management service providers will be few. Their input to the workshop is nevertheless essential. PCB service industry participants will therefore be invited to attend.

17. *Priority sector partners* Priority sector partners identified through the national implementation plans and national action plans will be encouraged to attend.

18. *Bilateral donor organizations and intergovernmental organizations* The organizations supporting the workshop and other funding organizations working in the area of PCB remediation will be invited to attend, as will GEF and its implementing agencies.

C. Workshop support

19. The United States Environmental Protection Agency and the Organization of American States are both providing financial support for the workshop.