

UNITED NATIONS ENVIRONMENT PROGRAMME



Inventory of Information Sources on Chemicals

PERSISTENT ORGANIC POLLUTANTS



Prepared by UNEP Chemicals

November 1999

INTER-ORGANIZATION PROGRAMME FOR THE SOUND MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS

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This publication is produced within the framework of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC).

The Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), was established in 1995 by UNEP, ILO, FAO, WHO, UNIDO, and OECD (Participating Organizations), following recommendations made by the 1992 UN Conference on Environment and Development to strengthen cooperation and increase coordination in the field of chemical safety. In January 1998, UNITAR formally joined the IOMC as a Participating Organization. The purpose of the IOMC is to promote coordination of the policies and activities pursued by the Participating Organizations, jointly or separately, to achieve the sound management of chemicals in relation to human health and the environment.

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Preface

The United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), held in June 1992, endorsed Agenda 21, an action plan for sustainable development of the planet. Chapter 19 of Agenda 21 addresses the Environmentally Sound Management of Toxic Chemicals including Prevention of Illegal International Traffic in Toxic and Dangerous Products. This chapter calls for strengthening of international coordination of activities related to chemical management and recognizes as one of the objectives of Programme Area C of Chapter 19 (Information Exchange on Toxic Chemicals and Chemical Risks); to promote intensified exchange of information on chemical safety, use and emissions among all involved parties.

To comply with the recommendations made at UNCED, UNEP convened an interagency consultation on 14 January 1993. This consultation requested UNEP to compile information on chemical safety information sources held by international and regional organizations. UNEP compiled this information and published Inventory of Information Sources on Chemicals in 1997 dealing with Intergovernmental Organizations. An electronic database of the Inventory was also developed for further promote the accessibility of data to governments, NGOs, and other customers for the information.

In its decision 19/13 C of February 1997 on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), the Governing Council of UNEP requested the Executive Director of UNEP to initiate immediate action including improvement of access to national information on persistent organic pollutants, as well as improved access to information by all countries.

In collaboration with Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), UNEP Chemicals initiated the development of a special POPs issue of the Inventory and extended the work to the national level. This first edition of "Inventory of Information Sources on Chemicals: POPs" was developed from information collected through a questionnaire submitted to relevant international organizations and POPs national focal points as well as UNEP's own research on Intergovernmental Organizations. Depending on the availability of resources further work will be undertaken to complete and update this inventory on POPs.

UNEP greatly appreciates the efforts of experts in national governments and intergovernmental organizations who provided the information for the compilation. We wish to thank in particular Ms. Ursula Bruckmann of Fachinformationszentrum Chemie,

Germany for her extensive efforts to assist in compiling and organizing the information. I also acknowledge with appreciation the work done by UNEP Chemicals consultants and staff including Mr. R. Rodriguez, Ms. Y. Chu, and Mr. S. Nishimura, under the guidance of Ms. F. Ouane-Keita.

James B. Willis Director, Chemicals

Table of Contents

Introduction			1
1	Inte	International Organizations	
	1.1	Risk assessment and data on POPs	3
	1.2	Source, exposure and environmental fate	16
	1.3	Toxicology and health aspects	29
	1.4	Waste management	37
	1.5	Management and safe use of pesticides	46
	1.6	Convention and programme	66
2	Nati	ional information sources	73-140
		Australia	73
		Austria	77
		Benin	79
		Bulgaria	81
		Canada	82
		Chile	89
		Cyprus	89
		Czech	89
		France	91
		Gambia	92
		Germany	93
		Guinea	97
		Italy	97
		Japan	97
		Korea, Republic of	98
		Kuwait	99
		Latvia	99
		Macedonia	100
		Madagascar	100
		Netherlands	101
		New Zealand	101
		Niger	104
		Republic of Armenia	104
		Romania	105
		Singapore	106
		Slovak	106

	Slovenia	108
	Sweden	108
	Switzerland	114
	Thailand	125
	United Kingdom	126
	United States of America	135
	Western Samoa	139
Appendix	Index for International Organizations	141

Introduction

Persistent organic pollutants (POPs) are organic compounds of natural or anthropogenic origin that resist photolytic, chemical and biological degradation. They are characterized by low water solubility and high lipid solubility, resulting in bioaccumulation in fatty tissues of living organisms. POPs are transported in the environment in low concentrations by movement of fresh and marine waters and they are semi-volatile, enabling them to move long distances in the atmosphere, resulting in wide-spread distribution across the earth, including regions where they have never been used. Thus, both humans and environmental organisms are exposed to POPs around the world, in many cases for extended period of time.

Over the past several years, the risks posed by POPs have become of increasing concern in many countries, resulting in actions to protect human health and the environment being taken or proposed at the national, regional and international levels. The following list includes some of the major ongoing global initiatives that are directed at identifying POPs and developing risk management measures to control the exposure of humans and the ecosystem to these substances:

- 1. Proposed UNEP Global Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Governing Council Decision 19/13C, February 1997).
- 2. UNEP Global Programme of Action for Protection of Marine Environment from Land-based activities (Washington, D. C., October 23 November 3, 1995).
- 3. UN ECE Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP) which includes POPs

The May 1995 meeting of the UNEP Governing Council (GC) adopted Decision 18/32 on POPs, which invited the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC), working with the International Program on Chemicals Safety (IPCS) and the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemicals Safety (IFCS), to initiate an expeditious assessment process, initially beginning with a short-list of twelve POPs: aldrin, chlordane, DDT, dieldrin, endrin, heptachlor, hexachlorobenzene, mirex, polychlorinated biphenyls, polychlorinated dibenzo-p-dioxins, polychlorinated dibenzo-furans and toxaphene.

The Echmany 1007 LINED CC agreed on Decision 10/12C which calls for the

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