

# Implementation of the Stockholm Convention



**Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)** is an acronym denoting pesticides, industrial chemicals and undesirable by-products from the production of chlorine-containing chemicals and from combustion processes, e.g. waste incineration, recycling of metals. POPs chemicals do not respect national boundaries. They can be found in places where they have never been used. They constitute a global environmental problem. Hardly any other subject could make it plainer to see how wrong it is to think that environmental protection is a “luxury” upon which policy makers will be able to lavish their attention as soon as they have solved all our major economic problems.

## Background

In May 2001, diplomats from 90 different countries signed in Stockholm a treaty banning twelve highly toxic POPs chemicals. Persistent as they are, POPs evaporate, travel with the winds and recondense – a process referred to as “global distillation” – thereby spreading from warm regions near the equator all the way to the colder corners of the earth, including the poles. High levels of POPs contamination are found in fish, seals, polar bears and birds. This, of course, emburdens any group of people who rely heavily on fish and meat of arctic origin for food.

Also highly imperilled are people in developing countries who either handle such substances themselves or live in or near areas in which they are applied. “Application” in the present sense includes POPs in agricultural production systems and the use of pesticides, measures for the control of malaria vectors with DDT, and diverse industrial production processes. Quite often, the people involved have no way of knowing how endangered they are, and most of them would not have any possibility of finding a different job or place to live, anyway. In some emerging countries, POPs are either still being produced, traded and applied – or are collecting as “inherited” burdens in more or less adequate depots.

## Systematic approach for implementation

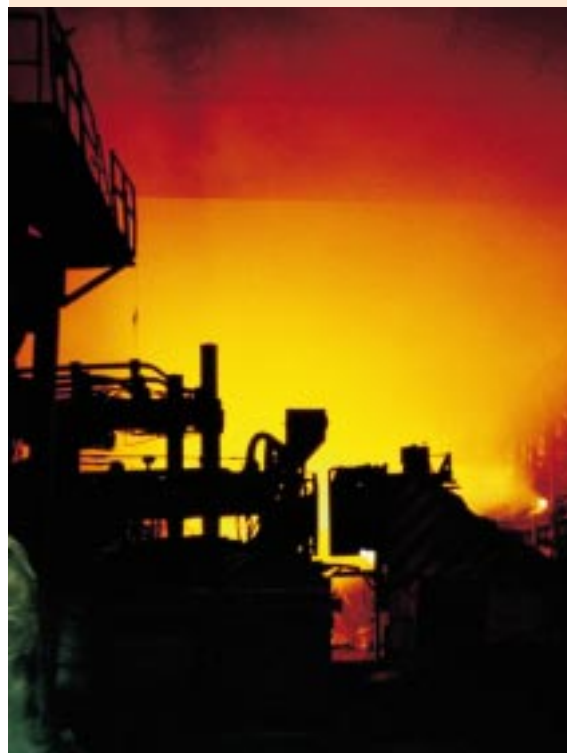
Every party to the Stockholm Convention has to develop a plan for the implementation of its obligations under the Convention.

Entry point for addressing the problems with POPs is the systematic development of a national inventory of the POPs chemicals. Supported by the Convention Project Chemical Safety, Thailand for instance started with identifying the relevant sources of dioxins and furans in the country using the UNEP checklist and their statistical data or estimates on industrial activities. With this procedure, the annual quantity of dioxin and furan releases into air was calculated. The theoretical findings were validated by selected representative measurements of emission concentrations. Thailand now is in the position to identify the major dioxin and furan emission sources in the country and to focus on the most efficient dioxin reduction measures.



*Taking samples for laboratory analysis to verify dioxin emissions in Thailand.*

*(Picture: Matthias Kern)*



*During steel recycling persistent organic pollutants might be emitted. Here in an arc furnace in Bangkok, Thailand.*

*(Picture: Matthias Kern)*



Other examples of support to developing countries provided by the GTZ Convention Project on Chemicals Safety include inter alia regional and national meetings with stakeholders to identify practicable means of POPs elimination or emission reduction, assistance for the development of obsolete pesticides and PCB inventories and implementation of respective disposal plans.

### Fields of action

Measures to identify, avoid, eliminate or reduce the release of POPs from production, use and storage sites aim at:

- ▶ Set-up of POPs chemicals inventories.
- ▶ Validating the theoretical findings of the inventory by representative measurements of concentrations in stockpiles and/or emissions in accordance to international standards.
- ▶ Holding awareness raising and planning workshops with all stakeholders involved.
- ▶ Introduction of alternative products and production processes.
- ▶ Environmentally sound disposal of stockpiles.
- ▶ Reduction of by-product emissions (dioxins and furans).

The **Convention Project Chemical Safety** assists partner countries to integrate activities for POPs elimination in their sustainable development strategies, and to find practical solutions for the implementation of the Stockholm Convention.



*Many old transformers contain high contents of polychlorinated byphenyls.*

*(Picture: Wolfgang Schimpf)*



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Bundesministerium für  
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und Entwicklung

