

1.64 Persistent Organic Pollutants

AWARE of the mounting evidence that reveals the global scale and severity of toxic persistent organic pollutant (POP) contamination of all life forms and ecosystems, in all regions of the planet;

FURTHER AWARE that flora and fauna, including fish, reptiles, birds and mammals, and humans, are all affected by POPs through a growing number of actual and suspected effects that includes cancer, damage to immune and reproductive systems and developmental problems;

APPRECIATING the special attention that UNEP has given to POPs, in the context (a) of its May 1995 Governing Council (GC) Decision 18/32 that established an expedited assessment process for a prioritized list of POPs, and (b) the Washington Conference on Protection of the Marine Environment from Land-based Activities, which agreed, among other things, that “international action is needed to develop a global, legally binding instrument, amongst other international and national actions, for the reduction and/or elimination of emissions and discharges, whether intentional or not, and where appropriate, the elimination of the manufacture and use of, and illegal traffic in”, priority toxic persistent organic pollutants;

SIMILARLY APPRECIATING the Fourth Session (1996) of the Commission on Sustainable Development’s endorsement of the Washington Conference’s Global Programme of Action, including recognition of the intention of governments to take action to develop a global, legally binding instrument to regulate POPs, with special consideration for countries in need of assistance;

NOTICING the important assessment of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety (IFCS) in June 1996 in Manila which concluded that available information on tasks a) to d) of UNEP GC Decision 18/32 is sufficient to demonstrate the need for international action on the 12 specified POPs and to move forward on realistic response strategies; and that international action, including a global legally binding instrument, is required to reduce the risk to human health and the environment arising from the release of these 12 POPs;

COGNIZANT of the fact that further actions on POPs is due for consideration at UNEP’s next Governing Council, in January 1997; and recognizing that a regional protocol to control POPs is in preparation under the UN/ECE Convention on Long Range Transboundary Air Pollution.

The World Conservation Congress at its 1st Session in Montreal, Canada, 14–23 October 1996:

1. URGES all States to instruct their representatives to the January 1997 UNEP Governing Council to support strong, effective actions on POPs at the global level, including:
 - a) establishment of an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC), with a mandate for the expeditious development of a global legally binding instrument;
 - b) support in the INC of an instrument that:
 - i) protects human health and the environment through measures which will reduce and/or eliminate the emissions and discharges of the POPs listed as priorities in UNEP/GC Decision 18/32 and, where appropriate, eliminate production and subsequently the remaining uses of POPs;
 - ii) includes mechanisms for adding other POPs beyond the original prioritized ones using science-based criteria which include application of a precautionary approach, consideration of risk and allowing for consideration of socio-economic factors in implementing any international action;
 - iii) takes into account the special concerns of developing countries and countries with economies in transition;
 - iv) promotes information exchange, transparency and effective participation by civil society in decision-making;
2. REQUESTS the Director General, within available resources, to work with the IUCN Commissions and membership networks to promote increased public awareness and understanding of the environmental, social, human and economic costs associated with the continued dependence on activities for which POPs are produced or used, and to assist in highlighting appropriate and acceptable alternatives.

Note. This Recommendation was adopted by consensus. The delegation of the State member Australia indicated that had there been a vote the delegation would have abstained.