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International POPs Elimination Project

*Fostering Active and Efficient Civil Society Participation in
Preparation for Implementation of the Stockholm Convention*

Country Situation Report on POPs in Moldova

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About the International POPs Elimination Project

On May 1, 2004, the International POPs Elimination Network (IPEN <http://www.ipen.org>) began a global NGO project called the International POPs Elimination Project (IPEP) in partnership with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP). The Global Environment Facility (GEF) provided core funding for the project.

IPEP has three principal objectives:

- Encourage and enable NGOs in 40 developing and transitional countries to engage in activities that provide concrete and immediate contributions to country efforts in preparing for the implementation of the Stockholm Convention;
- Enhance the skills and knowledge of NGOs to help build their capacity as effective stakeholders in the Convention implementation process;
- Help establish regional and national NGO coordination and capacity in all regions of the world in support of longer term efforts to achieve chemical safety.

IPEP will support preparation of reports on country situation, hotspots, policy briefs, and regional activities. Three principal types of activities will be supported by IPEP: participation in the National Implementation Plan, training and awareness workshops, and public information and awareness campaigns.

For more information, please see <http://www.ipen.org>

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This report is available in the following languages: English summary and Russian full report

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What are POPs?

Persistent organic pollutants belong to a group of hazardous substances that are used in industry and agriculture. Sometimes POPs are generated by industrial processes (e.g. incineration). POPs are persistent, highly toxic and potentially hazardous for human health and environment.

POPs sources

Due to intensive agricultural use of cultivated lands in the Republic of Moldova, the following POPs pesticides were applied: dichlorodiphenyltetrachloroethane (DDT) and toxaphene.

In the electrical power industry and other industrial sectors, hexachlorobenzene (HHB) and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) were applied.

Besides that, it is clear that dioxins and furans are generated as by-products of incineration processes and other industrial processes containing chlorine.

POPs contamination levels

According to inventory works implemented in the framework of GEF project, 3.94 thousand tons of pesticides were buried (including 654.1 tons of different DDT preparations) in 1978 - 1988. By 2003, 1793 tons of banned and obsolete pesticides were still stored in inadequate storage facilities. Transformers produced in the former USSR still contain about 46 thousand tons of dielectric liquids at annual losses of about 9.5 - 10 tons. Besides that, old capacitors in storages of industrial facilities contain several hundreds of tons of PCBs. There are no garbage incinerators in the territory of the country, and there is no recycling system for empty plastic bottles - as a result, these bottles are often burned in territories of human settlements.

Adverse impacts of POPs

According to data of the 1980s, in rural settlements of Moldova, incidence of DDT traces in breast milk reached 96.2%. It is fairly difficult to identify specific direct health impacts of POPs in the case of individual patients; however, statistical data suggest higher incidence of cirrhosis and generally low health status of rural residents, particularly young people. POPs impacts on reproductive health also seem obvious.

The following key problems and priorities were identified:

- Public awareness of POPs-related hazards is extremely low; generally, residents of the country have no information on key sources of POPs releases.

- Key routes of human exposure to POPs incorporate: household use of empty packaging from POPs; use of construction materials from destroyed storages of banned and obsolete pesticides (including POPs pesticides), storage and application of unidentified pesticides in subsistence and farm agriculture (including application of pesticides without adequate protective gear); application of dielectric liquids from transformers and capacitors for household purposes, incineration of garbage and plastic items, use of worn tires for heating and meat smoking.
- POPs levels in food and soils are monitored extremely rarely.
- Besides that, there is another problem that also needs addressing - i.e. technical difficulties of POPs elimination, even if people are aware of their adverse effects.

POPs management legislation

Decision No. 606 of the Government of the Republic of Moldova of June 28, 2000 had approved and launched implementation of the National Action Plan for Waste Reduction and Elimination.

The National Plan for Implementation of the Stockholm Convention was developed.

Governmental Decree No. 1155 of October 20, 2004 had approved the National Strategy for Reduction and Neutralisation of POPs Releases and the National Action Plan for Implementation of Provisions of the Stockholm Convention.

The Ministry of Ecology and Natural Resources launched implementation of the above documents. The documents' deficiencies are associated with their reliance on external funding.

Environmental NGOs also address these problems - they were discussed at the Fourth Republican Forum of Environmental NGOs (December 2-3, 2004).

Status of ratification of the Stockholm Convention

The Parliament of Moldova ratified the Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants (Aarhus, 1998) on April 25, 2002 and the Stockholm Convention (on February 19, 2004).

There are no forces that object to ratification of the Convention.

NGO recommendations on the elimination of POPs

Now, POPs and unidentified pesticides are being concentrated in duly equipped storage facilities, designated for these purposes in every district. Eventual elimination of these substances should be made with application of safe technologies (the topic is discussed by NGOs and governmental entities).

Public awareness activities to reduce adverse health and environmental impacts of POPs include: Publication of information brochures and leaflets; activities to inform teachers; development of partnerships between NGOs, the academic community and the governmental sector for elimination of POPs and mitigation of their adverse impacts; and mobilisation of partners and resources for finance and technical assistance.

In the course of the seminar, proposals were developed for incorporation into the National Plan for Implementation of the Stockholm Convention:

Besides the obvious need of centralised elimination of already accumulated POPs, it is also necessary:

- to develop recommendations on public awareness raising in education facilities (particularly for young people) on prevention of adverse impacts of POPs;
- to establish (with involvement of local authorities) storage facilities for pesticides and packaging, for further transfer of pesticides to district storages and their eventual elimination;
- to organise collection of empty packaging and worn tires in the country for their further recycling or environmentally appropriate disposal.
- to address the problem of waste utilisation;
- to organise regular control of quality of agricultural products and monitoring of POPs levels in soils.

Information resources on POPs in Moldova

Web-site www.moldovapops.md , databases, reports, research reports, reports of the Preventive Health Care Centre, etc., newspaper articles, popular brochures and leaflets.