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**COALITION OF NORTH AMERICAN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH AND HUMAN RIGHTS
ORGANIZATIONS DEMAND NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS SUPPORT GLOBAL ELIMINATION OF
TOXIC CHEMICALS**

ANCHORAGE, AK, USA; TORONTO, ON, CANADA; TEXCOCO, STATE OF MEXICO, MEXICO: Today, health, human rights, environmental justice, and conservation organizations across North America are calling on the governments of Mexico, Canada, and the United States (US) to join them in opposition to the continued use of pentachlorophenol (PCP). Coalitions in each of the three countries are sending letters in advance of the Conference of the Parties (COP7) of the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) in May 2015 demanding support for a global ban on PCP, as well as two additional substances recommended for global elimination by a UN expert committee (aka POPs Review Committee).

PCP has been used throughout the world as an insecticide, fungicide, and defoliant. Currently, it is used primarily as a wood preservative pesticide for utility poles, with the majority of use in the U.S. and Canada. Due to its high toxicity and persistence in the environment, PCP has already been banned in many countries. "Pentachlorophenol has global health implications since it is found in the bodies of people throughout the world including Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic. Now governments must agree to finally eliminate this toxic chemical," said Pamela Miller, Executive Director of Alaska Community Action on Toxics.

People are exposed through inhalation and ingestion of the chemical, skin contact, and contaminated ground water. PCP is a persistent toxic chemical found in the breast milk, blood, amniotic fluid, adipose tissue, and seminal fluid of people throughout the world. The chemical is associated with adverse health effects including damage to the developing brain and nervous system, impairment of memory and learning, disruption to thyroid function, immune suppression, infertility, and increased risk of certain cancers such as non-Hodgkin lymphoma.

"As a coalition of NGOs and academics from throughout Mexico, we are calling on the Mexican government to support a global ban on PCP without exemptions, and demanding a thorough investigation of the environmental and health impacts at the maquiladora manufacturing facility that produces PCP for wood preservation and the only manufacturer of wood-preserving PCP in North America, according to the producer," states Fernando Bejarano with Red de Acción en Plaguicidas y Alternativas en México (RAPAM) and IPEN hub for Latin America and the Caribbean.

"We are urging the Canadian government to align itself with other countries around the world that have stopped using PCP. The POPs Review Committee has been tremendously thorough in its work and has demonstrated that safe alternatives to PCP exist that will allow present users to move away from PCP," states Fe de Leon, Researcher with the Canadian Environmental Law Association. "Canada's support for global

elimination for the three new toxic substances is essential to continue the efforts for reducing POPs levels in Canada and around the world.”

Children may be exposed to this carcinogenic substance while they are playing in and around PCP-treated poles in residential areas and near schools and parks. Recent studies have confirmed that children in the U.S. are still being exposed to pentachlorophenol, even though PCP was banned for almost all uses in 1987 except for wood preservation of utility poles. PCP-treated poles are being re-used in landscaping, livestock enclosures, and gardening applications that can result in continued exposures. Occupational exposure to PCP is a concern in the manufacturing and application process.

“Pentachlorophenol (PCP) is almost entirely used in Canada and US on utility poles. Non-chemical alternatives for these uses are readily available, require less maintenance, have a longer service life and have already been implemented in both U.S. and Canada. In Canada PCP has been almost completely phased out. Therefore, there is no reason for continued use of this highly toxic substance. IPEN strongly recommends listing PCP in Annex A of the Stockholm convention with no specific exemptions,” stated Dr. Olga Speranskaya, Co-Chair of IPEN, an international network of 700 participating organizations working for a toxics-free future.

Next month, the international community of 179 nations that have ratified the Convention is meeting in Geneva, Switzerland to discuss a global ban of PCP. Mexico and Canada are Parties to the Convention. The United States has not ratified and is not a Party to Convention but can play an instrumental role protecting the health of the global community by supporting a ban on PCP. The UN expert committee of the Stockholm Convention recommended the global elimination of pentachlorophenol in October 2014. In its recommendation for the Stockholm Convention, the Committee cited pentachlorophenol’s persistence, bioaccumulation, long-range transport, and its toxic impacts. The Committee found wide availability of non-chemical alternatives that were much safer than pentachlorophenol. The Committee also recommends the global elimination of two additional substances, hexachlorobutadiene, produced as a byproduct in the manufacture of chlorinated solvents; and chlorinated naphthalenes, unintentionally produced through such processes as waste incineration, metals smelting, and cement production. Governments around the world will decide on the recommendations for global elimination of these three toxic substances in May 2015, but Parties to the Stockholm Convention on POPs typically accept the recommendations of its expert committee.

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