

OEWG 12 - IPEN intervention on General Technical Guidelines on POPs waste.

Thank you Chair

I speak on behalf of IPEN, a network of more than 600 civil society organizations in over 120 countries. We appreciate the work done by the Small Intersessional Working Group on the update of the Technical Guidelines addressing POPs wastes, although we believe that much more has to be done regarding the definition of Low POPs Content Levels which set the limits for proper POPs waste management. The current weak limits for POPs waste for several POPs groups has resulted in recycling of vast amounts of POPs. These groups include SCCPs, PBDEs, HBCD, dioxins and dioxin-like PCBs and should have much stricter limits in the technical guidelines.

Every year we lose control over approximately 10 kg TEQ of dioxins and furans in wastes such as incineration fly ash. This amount of dioxin is equal to the tolerable intake for the entire populations of 25 planet Earths. We are losing control over the most toxic chemicals that the Stockholm Convention aimed to eliminate. Another consequence of this weakness is the free movement of POPs in wastes across international borders because there are no regulatory barriers other than the Low POPs Content Levels.

There is strong evidence that weak controls of POPs such as brominated flame retardants are allowing them to enter new products made from recycled plastics. A recent study analyzing the effects on human cells of brominated dioxins in some recycled plastic children's toys, demonstrated they are toxic to humans and can significantly contribute to the dioxin daily intake level for children. Toys from countries of all UN regions had levels of toxic chemicals comparable to hazardous wastes.

Data available in each of the UN regions about contamination of chicken eggs by dioxins revealed many hot spots where the food chain was highly contaminated by this group of POPs, due to improper handling of wastes. Last year, IPEN in cooperation with experts from African countries, measured the highest ever levels of dioxins in free-range chicken eggs.

We recognized that in some countries, decisions to set Low POPs Content Levels which define POPs wastes, is a political decision driven only by the criteria of costs for additional treatment of waste. Most of the persistent organic pollutants are endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs), which were found to cause very significant damage to human health. EDC exposure costs up to € 163 billion or 1.28% of EU Gross Domestic Product per year according recent estimation by experts. These costs definitely outweigh the investment needed for proper destruction of POPs waste.

**Finally, we believe that the less visible costs of lost health and environmental values must be the priority criterion when setting the limits for POPs in wastes. We urge delegates to bear this in mind when deciding definitions of POPs waste through setting Low POPs Content levels.**

**By increasing thresholds for POPs in wastes and weakening the controls on waste, the convention would effectively be allowing hidden contamination of the environment and food chain.**

Thank you Chair