



a toxics-free future

IPEN Intervention on POPs Wastes

Given by Jindrich Petrlik

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Thank you, Mr. President,

I speak on behalf of IPEN, a network of more than 500 civil society organizations in over 100 countries. We appreciate the work done by Small Intersessional Working Group on the update of the Technical Guidelines addressing the POPs wastes, although we see less progress in comparison with their previous revision. Weak limits for POPs waste set in the General Technical Guidelines for POPs waste leads to recycling of vast amounts of POPs. Every year we lose control over approximately 10 kg TEQ of polychlorinated dioxins and furans in wastes such as incineration fly ash. This amount of dioxins 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. This is a direct consequence of very weak Low POPs Content levels set in the General Technical Guidelines for POPs waste. Another consequence of this weakness is the free movement of POPs in wastes across the borders because there are no other regulatory barriers than the Low POPs Content Levels.

We looked at data available in each of the UN regions about contamination of chicken eggs by dioxins and found many hot spots where the food chain was highly contaminated by this group of POPs, due to improper handling of wastes. Recently, 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, the decision 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. This approach undermines the objective of the Stockholm Convention, which is not about avoiding costs for treatment of wastes but *“is to protect human health and the environment from persistent organic pollutants.”* 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.

Thank you, Chair.