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PRESS RELEASE

UN experts recommend further industrial chemicals and a severely hazardous pesticide formulation be added to chemicals 'early warning system'

Geneva, 23 March 2012 – United Nations chemical experts have recommended that three industrial chemicals and one hazardous pesticide formulation containing paraquat dichloride be included in the Rotterdam Convention's Prior Informed Consent (PIC) procedure, considered a country's first line of defence against toxic chemicals.¹

The recommendations will be forwarded to the sixth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Rotterdam Convention in 2013.

Two new candidate pesticides were also reviewed by the Committee and one – trichlorfon – was recommended for inclusion in the PIC procedure.

The Convention's Chemical Review Committee based its recommendation on a review of national regulatory actions taken by the European Community and Brazil to ban or restrict the use of trichlorfon on the grounds that the pesticide poses an unacceptable risk to human health and the environment. Countries and other interested parties are encouraged to exchange information between countries and through the secretariat on ongoing trade and use of the pesticide.

"The recommendations to include these five chemicals in the PIC procedure demonstrate the ongoing demand by Parties for information supporting informed decision-making about the import and use of substances known to harm human health and the environment," said Jim Willis, Executive Secretary of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm Conventions.

"For the first time since the Convention entered into force in 2004, the Committee has recommended adding a severely hazardous pesticide formulation to the prior informed consent list, continuing to ensure that countries' rights to know and trade chemicals safely are respected," said Ms. Christine Fuell, Senior Technical Officer with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO).

¹ Perfluorooctane sulfonic acid, perfluorooctanesulfonates, perfluorooctanesulfonamides and perfluorooctanesulfonyls (UNEP/FAO/RC/CRC.8/CRP.7/Add.1/Rev.1); liquid formulations (emulsifiable concentrate and soluble concentrate) containing paraquat dichloride at or above 276 g/L, corresponding to paraquat ion at or above 200 g/L (UNEP/FAO/RC/CRC.8/CRP.8/Add.1); pentabromodiphenyl ether (CAS No. 32534-81-9) and pentabromodiphenyl ether commercial mixtures (UNEP/FAO/RC/CRC.8/CRP.11/Add.1); and octabromodiphenyl ether commercial mixtures (UNEP/FAO/RC/CRC.8/CRP.12/Add.1).

Action on paraquat dichloride came as the result of Burkina Faso's notification to the Convention in 2010.

Editors

Jointly supported by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and by the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the Rotterdam Convention prevents unwanted trade in the chemicals included in its legally binding prior informed consent (PIC) procedure.

The Rotterdam Convention encourages nations to help each other to safely manage chemicals in international trade. The Prior Informed Consent, or PIC, procedure provides an early warning system that empowers countries to take informed decisions on whether or not to import hazardous chemicals in order to minimize the risks posed to human health and the environment.

At present, there are a total of 43 banned or severely restricted industrial chemicals and pesticides, including four severely hazardous pesticide formulations listed in the Rotterdam Convention's Annex III and therefore subject to the PIC procedure.

The Rotterdam Convention does not introduce bans but fosters information exchange mechanisms to help improve decision making about the trade of hazardous chemicals. It enables member Governments to alert each other to potential dangers by exchanging information on chemicals and to take informed decisions with regard to whether they want to import such chemicals in the future.

The Convention makes the international trade in hazardous chemicals more transparent and less vulnerable to abuse through its export notification provisions and by encouraging harmonized labeling of chemicals. Exporting member Governments are responsible for ensuring that no exports leave their territory when an importing country has made the decision not to accept a PIC chemical.

In this way, the Rotterdam Convention helps member Governments to improve their national capacity for chemicals management, and to protect human health and the environment. It also encourages all stakeholders to identify and promote safer alternatives.

For more information, please see www.pic.int.

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