

# THE NEXT PHASE – A LIVING CONVENTION

The entry into force of the Stockholm Convention finishes one phase or work on dealing with Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), and signals the start of a new phase. The Convention does not just deal with the past, the twelve substances that it identified for action, but also with future potential threats of a similar nature. The convention was designed to be able to respond to those new threats, and to find new and better ways of dealing with the old threats.

- ◆ Those countries which have ratified the convention have the ability to make decisions at regular meetings called “Conference of the Parties”. The decisions they can make include:
  - ✓ Adding new POPs: The twelve pollutants chosen for action by the Stockholm Convention have a long record of harm to the environment and people’s health. They have already been banned in some countries. There are several other substances that did not make the list, but may prove to just as harmful. The Stockholm Convention allows countries that have ratified the Convention to propose adding new substances to the list of those targeted for ultimate elimination.
  - ✓ Defining best techniques and technologies: In trying to dispose of pollutants identified under the Convention, countries that have ratified are obliged to use the best methods and technologies. What those “best available techniques and best environmental practices” might be are not yet defined.
- ◆ There are some immediate obligations for countries that have ratified. Perhaps the most important is that they have two years from the date that the Convention enters into force to develop an action plan on how to start getting rid of POPs. This can be done separately, or with other countries in a region.
- ◆ Under the action plan, each country must work out how much of each of the POPs identified it is currently releasing, and must review its laws and policies to see if they are up to the task of meeting obligations to reduce and eliminate those POPs.
- ◆ Every five years, each country must report on the effectiveness of its plan.
- ◆ In many countries, non-government organizations, such as environmental groups, or health organizations helped persuade their governments to take part in the Stockholm Convention, and also helped to provide information on POPs to the people of the country. The Convention recognizes that contribution, and encourages countries to provide opportunities for public participation at the national level in providing input on the implementation of the Convention.