

Foreword

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The 6th International HCH & Pesticides Forum in Poznan brought us to a real milestone - a point not only for looking back over 10 years of Forum activities but especially a point for looking towards the future.

In the way forward lies a strategy for solving the problem of obsolete pesticides in Central Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and its implementation. Here we have a common commitment and we shall realise this objective.

Where do we stand now?

The Forum, through its recommendations, brought together a strong and very broad consensus on the actions needed. So now it is up to us all to bring these recommendations to life.

After Poznań's meeting, we visited the European Parliament and talked to many politicians across the whole political spectrum. There was, in fact, no politician who did not understand the extent and the urgency of the problem. This visit led to various political actions.

In the middle of June 2001, the **Committee on Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy of the European Parliament** raised the issue of obsolete pesticides in the accession countries with the Commission. In July, after a lively debate, the Committee decided to write a letter to the ambassadors of the 10 accession countries, requesting the countries to report on the government's estimates of the range and quantity of such stocks held and the plans how these may be disposed of. A copy of one of these letters is appended to this foreword. In fact, these letters have created a unique opportunity for all concerned governments in the region, to explain to the European Parliament the needs and urgencies of their problems and in this way to bring this issue on the political agenda. Therefore it is now up to each of the governments to raise its voice!

The issue was also addressed at the **POPs Convention** meeting in Stockholm at the end of May. The German Minister of the Environment, Mr. Jürgen Trittin, asked participants to consider seriously the problem of obsolete pesticides in Central and Eastern Europe.

Then in August, we received a letter from the Cabinet of Commissioner Wallström, also appended to the foreword, congratulating the Forum on the results achieved in Poznań, confirming that the Community has signed the Stockholm Convention, and expressing its deep concern, regarding the elimination of persistent pollutants, as well as its commitment to support and promote the environmentally sound disposal of the existing stocks of obsolete pesticides within the current EU-funding channels.

Recently, the 15 Ministers of Environment of the EU agreed the draft of the **6th Environment Action Plan** and, for the first time, obsolete pesticides in the accession countries have been made a priority issue in the Programme.

Awareness is growing but more has to be done.

We should not forget that the impact of unwanted pesticides is one of the world's major environmental problems. There is no country that is currently free from such problems but they are more grave in the developing countries and in the countries with economies in transition.

Other organisations than EU?

The signature of the POPs Convention is a major step forward. The GEF, being the interim financial mechanism for putting in place the Enabling Facilities will play a vital role. International organisations UNIDO, UNEP Chemicals and UNDP are now together with problem-owing countries forwarding proposals for inventory works for POPs related contaminations. So far proposals from 7 Central Eastern European countries have been accepted.

Also the AMAP, Arctic Monitoring Assessment Programme with its Arctic Council Action Programme, having the objective to eliminate pollution of the Arctic, is an important organisation. Projects on destruction of PCB's and obsolete chemicals are financed by Canada, Finland, Norway, Sweden and USA. As many of the sources are stemming from the Central Eastern European Countries, this programme will also contribute to the elimination of large obsolete pesticides stocks.

In October 2001, HELCOM published the report "The pesticides selected for immediate priority action", stating that the problem of obsolete pesticides in the region is obviously of serious concern and should be addressed in the future.

Among the **OECD Member States** the only major contributors to solutions in the region to date are Denmark and the Netherlands. They have been taking the lead, but which countries will follow?

Industry co-operation?

We have had constructive discussions with industry. They are very much aware of the problems and within the framework of building up new national crop protection associations in the region, the crop protection industry is willing to participate. Its future engagement is highly dependent of the leadership of others, mainly the international organisations.

Other industries and the financial institutions?

Many institutions have reservations to associating themselves with the issue of obsolete pesticides. Much needs to be done to persuade these organisations that the inherited problems influence the sustainable development of the wider society in the regions concerned. We see here an important role for the crop protection industry in convincing other industries and organisations of the need to contribute to the solution of the problem.

And finally the involvement of the Central European and Central Asia countries?

In Poznań, the Polish government declared the obsolete pesticides issue to be a national priority and recently the Lithuanian Vice Minister of Environment declared on television that the disposal of obsolete pesticides had been made a national priority.

As such are the countries of Central Eastern Europe and Central Asia the most important parties, who have to address the issue to the international community. Political commitment is needed. Efforts from others will have no effect without strong support from national governments. Governments and all other stakeholders must work hand in hand to push the issue forward as a national priority.

The process is underway, but more concrete steps are needed.

Finally we hope that when we meet again in Kiev in May 2003, where the Ukrainian Institute of Occupational Health will host the 7th Forum, many new efforts have been taken and a real contribution to solving the problems of obsolete pesticides in Central European and Central Asian countries have been seen.

Where should our work lead to?

The elimination of obsolete pesticides in the region can only be solved by the creation of a special programme. The creation of a "Central Eastern European and Central Asia Stockpile Programme" is therefore the objective to be realised as soon as possible. This can only be achieved if all the governments and national and international stakeholders will commit themselves to co-operation of appropriate action. We will dedicate all our efforts to the realisation of this goal!