

Stockholm Convention, Provisions, POPs, Ratification, Recent Update

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The **Stockholm Convention** is a **global treaty adopted in 2001** to protect both human health and the environment from harmful chemicals called **Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)**. It aims to reduce or eliminate the production, use and release of these toxic substances worldwide.

The Stockholm Convention

- The Stockholm Convention is an **important international treaty** aimed at protecting human health and the environment from harmful chemicals called **Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)**.
- These are **chemicals that do not easily break down** and can travel long distances and accumulate in the food chain, affecting humans, wildlife and nature.
- POPs are usually **low in water but high in fat solubility** and their presence can also contribute to **climate change**.
- The convention was **adopted in 2001** and came into force in **2004, with over 110 countries agreeing to follow its rules**.
- The main objectives of the Conventions are:

- **Control and reduce POPs** as it regulates both intentional and accidental production, manage stockpiles and reduce waste containing POPs.
- **Safe introduction of new chemicals** to ensure any new chemicals added are safe and monitored.
- Restrict use to establish general rules to limit and control the use of POPs.
- Support developing countries to provide financial and technical help to implement the treaty.
- Agencies involved:
 - Global organizations like **UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme)**, **UNDP**, **UNIDO** and **the World Bank** work together to implement the treaty, providing guidance, funding and technical support to countries.

Stockholm Convention Provisions

- The Stockholm Convention controls Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) through different rules, based on how these chemicals are produced and released into the environment. These rules are grouped into three Annexes:
 - **Annex A-Elimination**
 - Chemicals listed under **Annex A must be completely stopped from being produced and used.**
 - Countries are expected to phase out these POPs in a time-bound manner.
 - **Annex B-Restriction**
 - Chemicals under **Annex B are not fully banned but their use is strictly limited.**
 - They can be used only for specific purposes under strict control.
 - **Annex C-Unintentional Production**
 - This **Annex deals with POPs that are released unintentionally**, such as during industrial processes or waste burning.
 - Countries must take steps to reduce these releases, and eliminate them wherever possible.
 - **Exemptions under the Convention**
 - Countries can ask for temporary exemptions for some chemicals listed in Annex A and B.
 - These exemptions are allowed only for special needs and are valid for a **maximum of five years.**
 - Exemptions for chemicals like aldrin, chlordane, dieldrin, heptachlor, HCB and mirex have already ended and no new exemptions are permitted for them.
 - **Responsibilities of Member Countries**
 - Each country that is a party to the Convention must:
 - Reduce or stop the intentional production and use of POPs.
 - Control unintentional release of POPs from industries and other sources.
 - Ensure safe management of stockpiles and waste containing POPs.
 - Prepare and regularly update a National Implementation Plan (NIP) to show how the Convention will be implemented at the national level.

Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs)

- **Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) are toxic chemical substances** that remain in the environment for a very long time, do not break down easily and accumulate in the bodies of living

organisms, especially in fatty tissues.

- **Persistent:** They resist natural breakdown by sunlight, air and microorganisms.
- **Bioaccumulative:** They collect in the fat tissues of plants, animals and humans and increase in concentration along the food chain.
- **Toxic:** They cause serious health problems such as cancer, hormone imbalance, and damage to the immune system.
- **Long-range transport:** They move through air, water and migratory animals, spreading far from their original source.
- **Global impact:** POPs are found even in remote regions like the Arctic and oceans.
- These chemicals are often detected in birds and aquatic species, making them useful indicators of environmental pollution.

- **Sources of POPs**

- POPs mainly come from human activities such as:
- Industrial chemicals used in electrical equipment and flame retardants.
- Agricultural pesticides used to control pests.
- Unintentional by-products released during industrial processes and waste burning.

Stockholm Convention Ratification by India

- India became a party to the Stockholm Convention in **2006 and used Article 25(4)**, which allows it to follow an **opt-out approach**. This means that any new chemicals added to the Convention do not automatically apply to India **unless the government gives separate approval and informs the United Nations**.
- To implement the Convention within the country, the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (**MoEFCC**) **notified the Regulation of Persistent Organic Pollutants Rules, 2018 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**.
- These rules prohibited the **manufacture, use, import, export and trade of seven harmful POPs**, including chlordecone, hexabromobiphenyl, commercial octa-BDE, commercial penta-BDE, pentachlorobenzene, hexabromocyclododecane and hexachlorobutadiene.
- The Union Cabinet approved the ratification of these seven chemicals under the Stockholm Convention, showing India's commitment to protect human health and the environment.
- The Cabinet also delegated the power of future ratifications (for POPs already regulated in India) to the Ministers of External Affairs and Environment, making the procedure faster and simpler.
- POPs are dangerous because they remain in the environment for long periods, spread across borders and can cause cancer, nervous system damage, immune disorders, reproductive problems and developmental issues in children.
- India's ratification helps in controlling hazardous chemicals, updating the **National Implementation Plan (NIP)** and accessing financial support from the **Global Environment Facility (GEF)**.

Stockholm Convention Recent COP 2025

- The **12th Conference of the Parties (COP-12)** to the Stockholm Convention was held at the Geneva International Conference Centre, **Switzerland in 2025**.
- The meeting was held together with the **17th COP of the Basel Convention and the 12th COP of the Rotterdam Convention**, showing close cooperation among the three chemicals and waste conventions.
- The main theme of the meetings was **“Make visible the invisible: sound management of chemicals and wastes”**, highlighting the hidden dangers of hazardous chemicals.
- The Stockholm Convention COP-12 adopted 29 decisions, including joint decisions taken by all three conventions on common issues.
- A major outcome was the **addition of three new chemicals to Annex A (Elimination list) of the Stockholm Convention**:
 - **Chlorpyrifos (a pesticide)**
 - **Long-chain perfluorocarboxylic acids (LC-PFCAs)**
 - **Medium-chain chlorinated paraffins (MCCPs)**
- The funding requirements for implementing the Convention during 2026–2030 were sent to the **Global Environment Facility (GEF) for financial support**.
- **Financial assistance was provided to developing countries** and economies in transition to attend the meetings, with support from countries such as Canada, Germany, Japan, Netherlands, Norway, Switzerland, China and Finland.
- The three COPs jointly stressed the need for better coordination with other environmental agreements.
- Under the Basel Convention, new technical guidelines were adopted for **managing POPs waste, a strategic framework for 2025-2031** was approved and work on cross-border movement of textile waste was initiated.

Under the Rotterdam Convention, **Carbosulfan and Fenthion** were added to Annex III, and a new 2026-27 compliance work programme was adopted.

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