

# **International HCH & Pesticides Association**

Organiser of the International HCH and  
Pesticides Forum

Working towards the Elimination of Obsolete Pesticides in  
CEEC and NIS in the Next Decennia

Ms. Margot Wallström  
Commissioner for Environment  
Rue de la Loi 200  
Office: BU5 - 4/21  
B-1049 Brussels  
Belgium

Holte, 5 March 2004

Re: Status of Obsolete Pesticides in Central Europe and "EECCA" Countries, efforts and achievements

Dear Ms. Wallström,

Now that the EU Parliament is close to finalise its work programme and that a lot of the Commissioners are planning to change their job, IHPA would like to make the state of the art on progress and achievement on the issue of obsolete pesticides in Central Europe and Eastern Europe.

After 10 years of having organised International HCH and Pesticides Fora, the participants expressed their concern and called for a constructive regional action at the 6<sup>th</sup> Int. HCH and Pesticides Forum in March 2001. Thereafter IHPA has approached Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) and EU Commission for help and engagement and drawn attention to this problem and the need for solutions, as requested by the 6<sup>th</sup> Forum resolution.

This has resulted in questions by several MEPs on June 15<sup>th</sup> 2001 to EU Commission, DG Environment being discussed in the Parliament. On July 10<sup>th</sup>, the Environmental Committee of EU Parliament decided then to send letters to the representations in Brussels of all 10 Accession Countries asking the respective governments if they were aware of the problems and if yes, what they were intending to do about it.

In June the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework programme was adopted which included a paragraph on pesticides with specific action for the elimination of dangers due to obsolete pesticides in accession countries. This was the time for the Commission to discuss the issue and make the first plans for the future.

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Thereafter, reactions have been obtained from Czech Republic (12 Dec 2001), Latvia (18 Sept. 2001), Lithuania, Poland (3 April 2002), Romania (3 April 2002), Slovak Republic (23 Sept 2001), Slovenia (24 Oct 2001).

At the same time in a personal discussion in Brussels with Ms. Klingbeil, the new Head of the Waste Unit, flatly turned down any possible follow-up activity or initiative due to enormous workload, lack of capacity and necessary budget to execute any work concerning the issue. We regret, that any request for involvement on this issue has been turned down since then in a similar way since that period by the Waste Unit.

In May 2002, after the Nitrofen food contamination in former Eastern Germany, due to obsolete pesticides occurred, the dangers of obsolete pesticides became obvious. On 24<sup>th</sup> of June MEPs questioned EU Commission again on the dangers for the food due to the obsolete pesticides and what EU Commission planned to do to prevent re-occurrence in the future.

In July 2002, the decision approving 6<sup>th</sup> Environment Action Programme was adopted and the Communication 'Towards a Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable use of Pesticides' opened another door by stating clearly that *"specific support programmes should be developed which target the safe handling for obsolete pesticides and their safe destruction"*.

As a result of the Nitrofen case, DG Environment initiated the execution of the study by COWI Consult on the status of obsolete pesticides in the 10 Accession countries which has been published in October 2002

Further has the Commission initiated an analysis of the situation on food contamination and obsolete pesticides in former Eastern Germany. A report has been made for DG SANCO in February 2003. This report describes the situation as follows:  
Collection and destruction of plant protection products, which became unauthorised after reunification of Germany, were not properly and clearly organised. There is no clear overview at central and Land level of the amount of these plant protection products and the warehouses where they were stored. This statement was made, after 14 years of huge West German investments, in this context one should try to consider how (im)possible it would have been for the other CEEC governments to tackle these problems!

In June in the same year UNIDO and IHPA introduced the idea of a Stockpile fund for the region at the Workshop of Central European Ministers of Environment in Bratislava, June and invited you to this workshop, whereafter you were able to send Mr. Brouwer.

At the Stakeholders' Conference on the Development of a Thematic Strategy on the Sustainable Use of Pesticides, on 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2002 in Brussels, when I asked you to help to tackle the problem your committed attitude highly impressed me. There you

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promised to discuss the issue in your cabinet and bring this issue in each discussion with the new accession countries.

On 4<sup>th</sup> of December 2002, 28 MEPs signed a letter to the 10 governments of the Accession countries, indicating the dangers to the food supply and the recommendation to apply to help via the respective PHARE Fund and referred to the statements you have made before.

In the beginning of January 2003, the GEF sent us a letters expressing the willingness to support a Fund/Programme, but pointed out the need of the involvement of EU Commission and recommended the establishment of an Ad-Hoc Working Group, including participation of EU Commission.

In March and April 2003, Ms. Day and you sent both letters confirming the concern for the issue and rejecting the idea of a special fund, but encouraging the use of existing funding channels for NIS such as TACIS, ISPA for the set-up of the necessary destruction facilities, as well as the use of the Structural and Cohesion Funds for those countries for the new EU member states from May 2004 on. You also referred to possibilities for funding under the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. You also referred to the fact that none of the countries have addressed the issue during the negotiations and that responsibility and initiative has to be taken by the New Member States.

I hope you are aware of the fact that all countries have started the works and used the funds available in the Stockholm convention, and relating to the responsibility and initiative one can state that these efforts have only been achieved due to continuous efforts of the international organisations like UNEP Chemicals, UNIDO, and UNDP and forcing the countries to move forward.

At the 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Conference, 23-25 May in Kiev, in the final declaration the issue of obsolete pesticides and chemicals was included for the first time as an important issue to be addressed. During the conference the, "Verchovna Rada" 's (Ukrainian Parliament's) Committee on Ecological Policy, Natural Resources Utilization and Elimination the Consequences of Chernobyl Catastrophe ", organized a discussion on the environmental problems in Ukraine, with main focus on obsolete pesticides. MEP's De Roo and Tannock participated in the discussion and confirmed the urgency of the problem in Ukraine.

From 5-7 June, just 2 weeks later, 150 participants of the 7<sup>th</sup> International HCH and Pesticides Forum expressed unanimously in a declaration the need to work towards the establishment of a POPs and Obsolete Pesticides Programme for Central European and EECCA Countries for the environmentally sound management of unwanted stocks of POPs and other obsolete pesticides. Also it was recommended to establish a Working Group to develop such Programme of Action in co-operation with all stakeholders.

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After the Forum discussions with the GEF, Global Environment Facility, it was recommended, due to the present works to establish the African Stockpile Programme, that it was too early to start-up in parallel such a large-scale project in Central European and EECCA Countries. Instead it was proposed to use the engagement of the International HCH and Pesticides Forum as a platform to intensify efforts in regional co-operation of the concerned countries and donor coordination in the region and to work towards stronger political commitments of the countries and build the "Living Network for the Implementation of the Stockholm Convention for Obsolete Pesticides in "Central European and EECCA<sup>1</sup> countries".

In a side meeting at the July meeting of the IOMC in Geneva, was a broad agreement of the international organisations in supporting the idea and that the Executing Agency would be FAO for the applications to the World Bank and the GEF.

The numerous written and verbal requests to the various Departments in DG Environment, from that period on till present for possibilities to obtain support for the network within the framework of the various programmes, were permanently turned down. Your answer in December on my mail with this request from August 28<sup>th</sup>, confirmed that the funding programmes managed by DG Environment are not suitable for our purposes and that the PHARE, SAPARD and TACIS programmes may, offer possibilities. Even for the TACIS IBPP Programme, was explained, due to the fact that allocation of budgets only can be made per country, the Living Network, involving a group of countries would fail to qualify.

Until today, with astonishment we must conclude that none of the existing programmes is able to finance such an important topic, in spite the fact that the issue is since June 2001 part of the 6<sup>th</sup> framework (approved in July 2002)! It is a real shame that this initiative strands in this way within the Commission.

Our request to establish any kind of partnership between your network and the European Commission has been turned down to due limited resources. However at the same time, the commission is not replying to the request by the EU Parliament to allocate extra budgets for the issue and as such would really give you the necessary means to tackle this issue. We really do not understand that. Let therefore continue to report on these issues.

On June 24<sup>th</sup> the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy included in virtually all parts related to EU Extension to the East the need for additional funds for obsolete pesticides and the Committee explained the need as follows:  
"In order to effectively implement the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs Convention), and specifically the problem of obsolete pesticides, there needs to be a European focus combined with a real programme of action for the whole

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<sup>1</sup> EECCA has been used in the final Declaration of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial conference "Environment for Europe", 23 May 2003

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region of Central and Eastern Europe as described in the Kiev Declaration on the establishment of a POPs and Obsolete Stockpile programme for Central European and EECCA Countries for the environmentally sound management of unwanted stocks of POPs and other obsolete pesticides. Although both the European Commission and national governments have stated their willingness to act, especially by including the elimination of stocks of obsolete pesticides in its 6th Environmental Action Programme (Decision No 1600/2002/EC; art. 7(2d)), in practice extra efforts are needed from both sides to find sufficient funds under the existing instruments, either in funds not yet programmed or allocated to specific measures or, where there is scope for it, through re-programming”

On the 3<sup>rd</sup> of October, the Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Consumer Policy, amended the issue of obsolete pesticides in virtually all programmes for the Eastern EU Extension.

Also on 23 October, the EU Parliament Budget Committee amended the Draft General Budget of EU for 2004, which includes a specific paragraph 73: “Notes the danger to the environment resulting from persistent organic pollutants (POPs) and, in particular, from stocks of obsolete pesticides; urges the Commission to make the extra effort needed to find sufficient funds under existing instruments for elimination or environmentally sound management of unwanted stocks of POPs and other obsolete pesticides;

The definitive budget is now adopted in December 2003 and a report “Implementation of the 2004 budget, Working Document, on requests made to the Commission in resolutions relating to the 2004 budget, Committee on Budgets, Rapporteur: Jan Mulder” has been forwarded to you. The report includes specific items and lists a summary of the requests. In page 15, under “Elimination of pesticides”, the abovementioned issue is listed again.

We hope that this message was clear enough to take the necessary steps!

From 24 to 26 November 2003, former Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources of Ukraine, Ivan Zayets has visited the EU Parliament and discussed with a number of MEPs and representatives the issue of obsolete pesticides in Ukraine, dealing with 25000 tons of pesticides spread over 5000 locations. This visit has made it very clear that there is a strong interest by many groups within the Ukrainian society to solve this problem and to get the necessary support from the EU Commission. The Communiqué with all details we have sent you!

After that meeting, on January 13<sup>th</sup> this year, MEPs have questioned Commissioner Patten on the Ukrainian issue and that discussion gave a small ray of hope by the Commissioner answers: “I can only repeat that we will raise this issue with the Ukrainian authorities. We will be willing, if they wish, to consider ways in which we could assist through the TACIS programme. However, the need for funds for the overall elimination of pesticides in Ukraine is beyond the present budgetary resources of the European

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Union, though we can encourage Ukraine to turn to other possible financing sources in order to deal with what is a horrendously difficult problem.”

As you may know the Stockholm Convention will enter into force on 17 of May 2004. Within the framework of the Convention, a large number of activities have been initiated. A large number of countries in the region are involved in the Enabling Facilities and in the process of working on or finalizing the National Implementation Plans (NIPs). Czech Republic has already finalized the NIP. Most countries have applied with the help of the UN Organisations UNEP Chemicals, UNIDO and UNDP for a financial help of around 500.000 US Dollars. The NIPs now will deliver a first insight in the problems of obsolete pesticides and be the basis for further inventory works and following collection and final destruction. Especially after the completion of NIPs the need for funding and co-funding will be needed, as the necessary budget is missing and EU would play an important role.

Some countries have already started with actions such as Latvia with help of the Danish government has started the destruction with a mobile incinerator. Also Poland has started with strong efforts and own money to destroy pesticides. Also the Hungarian Government has in cooperation with NGOs started to make an inventory in order to assess the magnitude of the problem.

## **Summary over the last 4 years:**

- **Members of the European Parliament have made many efforts towards the EU Commission to take the action needed and have promised to continue their efforts**
- **The International HCH & Pesticides Association has made numerous efforts to convince EU Commission of the need to take action on this issue**
- **The Stockholm Convention has given a start for the NIPs for many of the Central European and EECCA Countries, however in the follow-up phase on the real collection and destruction additional funding will be needed**
- **In spite of the inclusion of obsolete pesticides in the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework programme for the past 4 years, the EU Commission has avoided concrete actions for the Central European and EECCA Countries**
- **As a consequence of the Nitrofen food scandal, a report has been made for DG SANCO and an report of the status of the problems of obsolete pesticides in the Accession countries have been made**

We feel that EU Commission has not fulfilled the many requests and the issues raised by MEPs and the IHPA in order to tackle the urgent and serious problems of obsolete pesticides and the dangers lying at the backdoor of the EU and the re-occurrence of new Nitrofen case in the next future.

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As a consequence of this situation described above we request the EU Commission, by means of the respective DG's to take the following steps as soon as possible:

- **Establish an action plan for obsolete pesticides and make a strong effort to make budget available according the requests as listed in the definitive budget adopted in December 2003 and the report "Implementation of the 2004 budget, Working Document, on requests made to the Commission in resolutions relating to the 2004 budget, Committee on Budgets, Rapporteur: Jan Mulder"**
- **Help to find mutual support from EU programmes for the financial support of the "Living Network for the Implementation of the Stockholm Convention for Obsolete Pesticides in "Central European and EECCA<sup>1</sup> countries" in order to help the establishment of the network as soon as possible**
- **Call on the various national Donor organisations to help to finance this important initiative**
- **If DG Environment is not able to make personnel available please approach other DG's such as DG Relex and stimulate that the issue is taken on. It may be clear that in case of lack of personnel one can delegate or outsource such tasks to other competent organisations**

We are confident that with your personal engagement will help to move this important issue forward in the next period as Commissioner for Environment. We have committed ourselves and are willing to serve wherever needed.

Hoping to receive a positive response and helping hand in the near future!

Yours sincerely,



John Vijgen MSc.  
Director  
International HCH and Pesticides Association (IHPA)  
Elmevej 14  
DK-2840 Holte, Denmark  
Ph: +45 45 41 03 21, Fax: +45 45 41 09 04  
Email: [john.vijgen@get2net.dk](mailto:john.vijgen@get2net.dk)  
Website <http://www.ihpa.info>

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<sup>1</sup> EECCA has been used in the final Declaration of the 5<sup>th</sup> Ministerial conference "Environment for Europe", 23 May 2003