



NEWS

President
News
History
For Kids
Topics
Our Government
Appointments

Calendar
Links
Help
HSD

[Latest News](#)
[Press Briefings](#)
[Federal Statistics](#)

THE WHITE HOUSE

Office of the Press Secretary

For Immediate Release

April 19, 2001

REMARKS BY THE PRESIDENT, SECRETARY OF STATE COLIN POWELL AND EPA ADMINISTRATOR CHRISTINE TODD WHITMAN IN ENVIRONMENTAL ANNOUNCEMENT

Rose Garden

[Listen to the President's Remarks](#)

10:20 A.M. EDT

THE PRESIDENT: Thank you all for coming. Secretary Powell and Administrator Whitman and I are pleased to make an announcement on the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants. This international agreement would restrict the use of 12 dangerous chemicals -- POPs, as they are known, or the Dirty Dozen.

Negotiations were begun by the previous administration, and this treaty achieves a goal shared by this administration. I'm pleased to announce my support for the treaty and the intention of our government to sign and submit it for approval by the United States Senate.

This convention is significant in several respects. First, concerns over the hazards of PCBs, DDT, and the other toxic chemicals covered by the agreement are based on solid scientific information. These pollutants are linked to developmental defects, cancer, and other grave problems in humans and animals. The risks are great, and the need for action is clear. We must work to eliminate, or at least to severely restrict the release of these toxins without delay.

Second, this agreement addresses a global environmental problem. These chemicals respect no boundaries and can harm Americans even when released abroad. Third, this treaty takes into account understandable concerns of less-developed nations. When these chemicals are used they pose a health and environmental threat, no matter where in the world they're allowed to spread. But some nations with fewer resources have a harder time addressing these threats, and this treaty promises to lend them a hand.

And finally, this treaty shows the possibilities for cooperation among all parties to our environmental debates. Developed nations cooperated with less-developed nations. Businesses cooperated with

environmental groups. And now, a Republican administration will continue and complete the work of a Democratic administration.

This is the way environmental policy should work. And I want to thank the United States delegation and all who helped negotiate this important treaty. And after our remarks here, we would like to welcome you in the Oval Office, so I can thank you personally.

Mr. Secretary.

SECRETARY POWELL: Thank you, Mr. President, Administrator Whitman. Ladies and gentlemen, President Bush's decision to sign the global treaty on persistent organic pollutants demonstrates America's leadership to help make the environment safe for all the world's people. The signing of this treaty on May 23rd in Stockholm and our intention to rapidly bring it into force reflect our government's clear understanding that many environmental problems are global in nature. And it reaffirms our commitment to fostering international cooperation to ensure worldwide environmental safety.

Administrator Whitman, in a moment or so, will go into the actions the United States government has taken to ban or severely restrict the production and use of these highly toxic chemicals here at home. I just want to note that one reason we have taken such strong steps here at home against these chemicals, chemicals which have links to reproductive failure and cancer, is their stable chemical structure. This means that they persist. They persist in the environment, and they accumulate in the food chain.

This is the same quality of stability that makes them such a potent international threat. Through a highly complex process, these pollutants circulate globally, throughout the atmosphere and in the oceans of the world to regions far from their source of origin. They have been found, for example, in Alaska and the Great Lakes, at great distance from the industrial and agricultural regions where they were released.

That is why the Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants is so critical. It commits countries to take significant steps to eliminate or restrict the production of these chemicals, whether they are in the form of pesticides, industrial chemicals, or as unintentional byproducts of industrial or combustion processes.

Let me cover just a few of the major points of the agreement. First, the treaty will ban production and use of pesticides that the President has noted are no longer registered for use in the United States. In recognition of the dire humanitarian need for DDT, for example, to fight malaria in Africa, an exception will be made for this purpose with respect to DDT, in line with international guidelines until a more cost-effective control method is found.

Second, in line with U.S. practice, the treaty will ban production and new use of PCBs. It will mandate national action plans against certain byproducts of combustion, including dioxin, and as in the United States, require use of best available techniques on new sources of POPs byproducts in key categories.

This convention also imposes controls on the handling of POPs

waste, as well as on controls on any trade in these chemicals, and it sets up a science-based process to consider whether other chemicals should be added to the convention.

The convention also establishes a flexible framework to provide technical and financial assistance to help countries implement their commitments. The control requirements will cover both developed and developing countries.

Finally, the treaty establishes mechanisms to help developing countries fulfil their obligations. The United States is already a leader in contributing generously to developing country efforts to control POPs. We provided over \$19 million in assistance from 1997 to 2000 for POPs-related projects, and we will continue to provide financial and technical support.

Global environmental protection is an important part of this administration's foreign policy agenda. In this regard, I also want to thank the diplomats and environmental professionals at the State Department, EPA and other agencies who worked closely with affected industry, environmental and native groups to conclude an agreement that we can all support. And I would like to single out for praise, former Deputy Assistant Secretary of State, Brooks Yeager, who led the U.S. delegation.

And finally, Mr. President, on behalf of these dedicated professionals that I have mentioned, and to all those who seek a safe environment for our children, I thank you for your personal interest and for your decision today.

Thank you.

ADMINISTRATOR WHITMAN: Mr. President, Mr. Secretary, first let me say how pleased I will be to be in Stockholm next month to represent -- as a representative of the United States, to sign this treaty. This is an issue that has been -- I have been questioned about by numerous of our international allies as to where the United States was on this issue, and whether or not we were going to go forward with it. And I will be very pleased to be that representative, because this treaty offers a new level of environmental and health protection for the people here in the United States, as well as around the world.

By severely restricting, and in some cases, entirely eliminating the production, use, and/or release of 12 chemicals covered, this treaty will help ensure that American people are protected from the threats that these chemicals present.

As the President mentioned, POPs have been linked to numerous adverse effects in humans and animals. Those include cancer, central nervous system damage, reproductive disorders and immune system disruptions. They are, in fact, lethal.

Here at home, as you know, the United States has already taken extensive steps and actions over many years to address the pollutants that are covered by this treaty. Registrations of nine of the pesticides covered in this treaty have already been cancelled. We have banned the manufacture of PCBs. And we have imposed stringent controls on the release of other covered chemicals.

We all can remember the lesson we learned from DDT, how bad it was for our environment, and yet how widely it was used to prevent disease and to help crops. A second widely-used pesticide, heptachlor, was also a chemical used with the best intentions, and the worst possible outcomes.

Clearly, domestic action alone on these chemicals is not sufficient. In spite of the steps that we have taken, the American public still finds itself at risk. These chemicals not only persist in the environment for years and years and even decades, they also travel far beyond their initial point of release and they gain in their toxicity as they accumulate. And that is something about which we must be very concerned.

Our experience has shown that effective, safe substitutes for these chemicals do exist. That's knowledge that I look forward, and I know we all look forward, to sharing with countries around the world, ways to continue their economic growth and their agricultural growth and protect their health, but using less deadly means.

By addressing on a global scale the threats that the Dirty Dozen pose, we are helping to meet our goal of leaving America's air cleaner, our water purer, and our land better protected than we found it.

I want to applaud the President for his vision in putting the United States squarely on the side of protecting human health and the environment. I have every confidence that with his leadership, the United States will play a major international role in meeting the sacred obligation we all have in preserving and protecting the Earth for all its inhabitants from the threat of pollution.

Thank you all very much. And now the President will have an opportunity to greet those who negotiated so long and hard on this treaty in the Oval Office. Thank you.

END 10:29 A.M. EDT

[Privacy Policy](#) | [Text Only](#) | [Help](#) |