



Webinar, PCB – A Forgotten Legacy?

25 October 2016, 13:00 (Geneva time, GMT +02:00)

A series of webinars on Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB) by the PCB Elimination Network Advisory Committee members, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

Participants:

Provisional agenda:

- 1) **Opening of the webinar and moderation – by Elsemieke De Boer, UNITAR**
- 2) **“Efforts toward the elimination of PCB” by Ms. Jacqueline Alvarez, Chemicals and Waste Branch, UNEP**
- 3) **Perspective on the phasing out of PCB by Ms. Yuan Chen (China)**, on behalf of party-nominated member Jinhui Li representing Asia and Pacific within the Advisory Committee of the PEN
- 4) **Questions and answers** and opportunity to share comments and information
- 5) **Upcoming activities**
- 6) **Closure** of the webinar

1) Opening of the webinar

Ms. Elsemieke de Boer, UNITAR, and Ms. Jacqueline Alvarez, Chemicals and Waste Branch, UNEP

Elsemieke de Boer welcomed the participants and explained that this webinar is the first in a **series of webinars** with the theme “**PCB – A Forgotten Legacy?**”

Jacqueline Alvarez introduced the agenda points.

2) “Efforts toward the elimination of PCB”

Jacqueline Alvarez, Chemicals and Waste Branch, UNEP.

Ms. Alvarez referred to the **goals of 2025 and 2028 of the Stockholm Convention**, indicating the **time limit**. By 2025 parties should phase out the use of PCB and by 2028 parties should establish Environmental Sound Management of PCB. In this regard, she started by asking where do we currently find ourselves in the process of PCB elimination? Although PCB is no longer produced, except in one country, equipment containing or contaminated with PCB are still in use. Ms. Alvarez also addressed issues regarding maintenance, storage and cross contamination, the latter has led to higher PCB estimates than the originally produced amount.

Some highlights on progress toward elimination by UNEP mentioned were the following.

- ✓ **Technical guidance available**, such as on inventories, Environmental Sound Management, disposal, etc.

Please visit:

<http://chm.pops.int/Implementation/PCBs/Guidance/tabid/665/Default.aspx>

- ✓ **The PCB Elimination Network (PEN) was established in 2009**. The PEN is a global multi-stakeholder network that promotes and encourages the environmentally sound management (ESM) of Polychlorinated Biphenyls (PCB) with a view to attaining the 2025 and 2028 goals of the Stockholm Convention.
 - There are currently still some vacancies within the Advisory Committee of the PEN, such as the WEOG representatives.

- PEN membership is open to governments, intergovernmental organizations, donors, PCB holders, non-governmental organizations, industry, experts/academia and business sectors. The PEN currently counts 439 members.
- **To apply for PEN membership**, please send an e-mail to: science.chemicals@unep.org

UNEP has recently developed a **new report: “A consolidated Assessment of efforts made toward the elimination of PCB”**. The report summarizes information on the amount of PCB produced, eliminated and to be eliminated. Among others, the report addresses several challenges and limitations, for example regarding inventories, measurement, cross contamination, open applications, etc. Ms. Alvarez addressed the progress per UN region and noted that in the case of Asia-Pacific, large differences in data can be seen when including or excluding Japan from the data, as they have made a lot of progress on eliminating PCB and creating inventories. According to Ms. Alvarez, overall there are many issues on reporting of quantities. She also stressed that equipment containing PCB accounts for the largest type of material containing PCB to be eliminated. She also pointed out that we should be critical of the data. Open Applications for example seem to have a small share, but we should keep in mind that no real inventory of the amount of PCB in Open Applications exist.

Ms. Alvarez mentioned the **PCB accident in Paraguay** in 2015. An electrical station with 20.000 transformers caught fire and as a consequence dioxins and furans were generated, soil was contaminated and a number of people were directly exposed to the pollutants released during the fire. For more information, please contact UNEP Chemicals and Waste Branch at science.chemicals@unep.org

Finally, Ms. Alvarez elaborated on some **food for thought**:

- The Stockholm Convention has been into force for more than 10 years. Can we eliminate the still more than 80% of PCB remaining before 2025/2028?
- Are we on the right track?
- How do we change the trend?
- Can PCB be seen as an opportunity to change?
- Strategies: joining efforts with other initiatives and programmes

There is an urgent need to step-up efforts to meet the 2025 and 2028 goals of the Stockholm Convention

Ms. Giulia Carlini asked Ms. Alvarez to share a good example of PCB elimination.

- **Ms. Alvarez** answered that that good examples will be shared by e-mail.

3. A perspective on the phasing out of PCB – The challenges of Eliminating PCB – Case studies

Ms. Chen Yuan, Stockholm Convention Regional Centre for Capacity-building and the Transfer of Technology in Asia and the Pacific and Basel Convention Regional Centre for Asia and the Pacific.

On behalf of party-nominated member Jinhui Li representing Asia and Pacific within the Advisory Committee of the PEN

Ms. Yuan explained that **PCB in Open Applications** such as in sealants and paints can contaminate construction debris if not removed from surroundings. This is especially a problem on farms. She also mentioned the case of treating waste wood with PCB paint. When this wood was used as animal bedding it has resulted in contamination of chicken and chicken eggs, as was the case in Portugal.

Ms. Yuan continued elaborating on **technology limitations**. She put the UNIDO Non-Combustion Facility forward, which is designed to treat around 750 tons per year. Hence, it has difficulty to treat high PCB level, it is not cost effective and the facility itself is very costly.

The Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (North Korea) is a country that should not be forgotten. It is the only country in the world that is still producing PCB. Their production has been decreased from 500 tons per year to 150 tons per year since 2006.

PCB in North Korea are mainly used as transformer oils, capacitors and hydraulic oils in the utility and mechanical industries in North Korea.

Ms. Yuan shared with the participants of the webinar that the Regional Centre recently had **two interns from North Korea**. She also explained that North Korea is **striving to introduce substitutes to PCB**.

Ms. Yuan ended her presentation with the following **recommendations for the phasing out of PCB**:

- Disregard political factors
- Which kind of technologies can be used in their countries?
- Open Applications of PCB should be gradually stopped and find available substitutive technology and products

- Cost-effective technologies for waste disposal should be promoted

4) **Questions and answers** and opportunity to share comments and information

Ms. Manal Samy Farag, from the Stockholm Convention National Focal Point in Egypt shared a **successful story on PCB Elimination**. She mentioned that 180 tons of pure PCB were managed and then treated abroad, as Egypt does not have the technology. Egypt still has to treat another 1000 tons of medium concentration (50-200ppm). She said that Egypt would need a de-chlorination unit and she stressed that there was a need for good inventories throughout the country. For example, there are no inventories for the capacitors. This are crucial factors to reach the goals of 2025 and 2028.

Jacqueline Alvarez (comment on Ms. Farag): How much PCB is left?

- **Ms. Farag** stressed that inventories were needed (e.g. at industrial facilities).
- **Ms. Alvarez** also indicated that more data on distribution of PCB around the world was going to be included in the follow up e-mail to participants, but also that relevant reports can be found on the following webpage: www.unep.org/chemicalsandwaste/

5) **Upcoming activities**

- Second webinar on “PCB – A forgotten Legacy?”, 1 November, 13:00 (Geneva time, GMT +02:00)
- Eight Conference of the Parties (COP) to the Stockholm Convention, COP 8, April – May 2017

6) **Closure of the webinar**

Ms. Alvarez thanked everyone for their participation and invited everyone to the next webinar in the series of PCB – A Forgotten legacy on 1 November 2016 at 13:00 (GMT +02:00).

<https://meetings.webex.com/collabs/#/meetings/detail?uuid=M35X3GX6LUWI93OZJJPZVWDJM4-6R2P&rnd=834975.96949>