

**Inception Workshop in Macedonia
on
PCBs Management**

Ohrid; Macedonia, 25 – 26 September 2007

Opening address by the representative of the GTZ

Dear Participants,
Ladies and Gentlemen

I am particularly grateful to the Government of Macedonia for hosting this very important workshop on PCBs, Polychlorinated Biphenyls, a pressing topic, which affects our health and even more the health of the next generation.

Environmental protection has become a key issue for policy-makers all over the world. However, until not long ago, policies aimed at environmental protection in many cases lost their strength once goods or substances were transported across international borders and used in numerous technical equipments, like transformers and electrical capacitors. Fortunately, in line with increasing globalisation of environmental policies, the international community has created a number of instruments to fight substances dangerous to environment and health on a global level.

On 17 May 2004, the Stockholm Convention entered into force, aiming to protect health and the environment from Persistent Organic Pollutants, the so called POPs. The POPs Convention places a worldwide ban on 15 particularly hazardous chemicals and thus started a process to get rid of a whole range of toxic substances such as PCBs¹ and Dioxins and Furans. Thanks to this internationally legally binding agreement the struggle to phase out the PCBs, one of the Persistent Organic Pollutants, gained a new quality. Moreover, the international community has

Wolfgang A. Schimpf
GTZ - Convention Project Chemical Safety Eschborn / Germany

succeeded in implementing one of the key requirements of Agenda 21, adopted 15 years ago at the UN Earth Summit in Rio, 1992, and reconfirmed at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002.

The chemicals industry all over the world is called upon to develop and implement alternatives to the POPs chemicals and environmentally sound disposal methods for POPs chemicals. Being one of the major producers and exporters of chemicals worldwide, the Federal Republic of Germany has a special responsibility to promote chemical safety and to support the implementation of internationally accepted standards for chemicals management, not only through technical cooperation, but also in the context of the international operation of chemical conventions.

German technical cooperation focuses particularly on environment protection and the environmentally sound development of the industrial sector. In Macedonia the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development supports technology transfer and capacities building in the context of a sustainable development strategy taking into account the recipient country's needs and capabilities. This will be done in close cooperation with the German Industry in form of public private partnership project – like the project with Envio Company and the GTZ, with the title “Improving of the management system of PCB contaminated equipment in Macedonia”.

Chemicals do not know boundaries. Toxic substances like PCBs, Dioxins and Furans, once released to the environment, can be transported over great distances by air, water, and contaminated foodstuffs. A single source of chemical pollution – either in an industrialised or in a developing country – can thus affect locations all around the globe. Consequently, we should join forces to tackle these problems together.

This Workshop is a concrete step in this direction. I am confident that your input into the discussion will produce a tangible progress.