



Rt Hon Michael Gove MP
Secretary of State for the Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Nobel House 17 Smith Square London SW1P3JR

10th April 2019

Acting to reduce global pollution from hazardous chemicals

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to you on behalf of CHEM Trust, an environmental NGO which focuses on chemicals policy, ahead of the ninth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm POPs Convention (COP-9) that will be held in Geneva, Switzerland, from 29 April to 10 May. The theme of the meeting will be "Clean Planet, Healthy People: Sound Management of Chemicals and Waste".

CHEM Trust is particularly concerned about Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), because they are chemicals that persist in the environment for many years, become widely distributed geographically, accumulate in the tissue of humans and wildlife, and have harmful impacts on human health or on the environment.

This year's meeting will particularly focus on two types of perfluorinated chemicals, PFOA and PFOS. These are part of a larger group of PFAS (per- and polyfluoroalkylated substances), made up of more than 4,000 different chemicals¹ which are ubiquitous in the environment and have been found in the blood of people all around the world².

We are writing to you to ask that the UK Government helps strengthen international controls on these chemicals by:

- Strongly supporting the listing of PFOA and related compounds in Annex A of the Stockholm, with no exemptions.
- Ending the exemptions to the ban on PFOS, given the availability of non-fluorinated firefighting foams.
- Discouraging substitution of PFOA or PFOS by other fluorinated organic chemicals.

¹ Toward a new comprehensive global database of per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs). [OECD, 2018](#).

² Synthesis paper on per- and polyfluorinated chemicals (PFCs). [OECD/UNEP, 2013](#).

Trustees

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In addition, we would ask the UK to strongly oppose the Russian Federation proposal³ to radically weaken the Stockholm Convention by making it harder to identify chemicals as POPs.

Finally, we are very concerned that research is showing that levels of Polychlorinated Biphenyl (PCB) contamination of Orca around the UK are not going down, even though these chemicals have been banned for decades⁴. We therefore call on the UK Government to implement a new study of all major legacy sources of PCB pollution in the UK, for example building sealants, and to bring in new regulations to prevent this pollution.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and we remain at your disposal for any further questions.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Warhurst', written in a cursive style.

Dr Michael Warhurst
Executive Director
CHEM Trust

In view of the public interest in this matter, we intend to make this letter publicly available.

³ Ninth Meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Stockholm Convention working document [UNEP/POPS/COP.9/15](#)

⁴ Predicting global killer whale population collapse from PCB pollution. [Desforges et al., 2018](#).