

International Actions on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and Heavy Metals under the Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP); Canadian SAO's letter

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U.S. State Department

Arctic Council Secretariat

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Department of Foreign Affairs
and International Trade



Ministère des Affaires étrangères
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July 22, 1999

ACX-0112

Mr. Ray Arnaudo
Chair, Arctic Council
Bureau of Oceans and International
Scientific Affairs
United States Department of State
Washington, D.C. 20520
U.S.A.

Dear Mr. Arnaudo:

**INTERNATIONAL ACTIONS ON PERSISTENT ORGANIC POLLUTANTS (POPs) AND
HEAVY METALS UNDER THE CONVENTION ON LONG-RANGE TRANSBOUNDARY AIR
POLLUTION (LRTAP)**

You will recall that successive declarations under both the Arctic Environmental Protection Strategy and the Arctic Council have called for international actions to control the release of POPs and heavy metals to the environment. In 1997 and 1998, the imperative for such action was emphasized by the findings included in the two reports from the Arctic Monitoring and Assessment Programme. Also in 1998, the Arctic Council adopted the "Regional Programme of Action (RPA) for the Protection the Arctic Marine Environment (PAME) from Land-based Activities" in which it is stated that *"the Arctic States should sign and ratify the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe LRTAP POP Protocol and encourage other states to do the same, with the aim of bringing the Protocol into force as early as possible."* A similar statement was made with respect to the Heavy Metals Protocol. Although 36 countries have signed the LRTAP Convention Protocols on POPs and Heavy Metals, only one country has ratified them. The protocols do not become legally binding (enter into force) until at least 16 Parties have ratified. At a POPs meeting in May, in Geneva, the Secretariat for the Convention gave a disappointing update on status. They recently asked countries for information on plans for ratification and the general response indicated that progress is not likely to be swift. This is worrying on at least two counts:

- it will delay implementation of actions to reduce releases of these substances to the environment, especially in eastern Europe; and

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- the tardiness of northern countries to ratify the LRTAP Protocol on POPs will send an unfortunate message to developing countries at the global negotiating table.

I think you will agree that in situations of this nature it is helpful if a political event can be identified which can act as a target date to catalyse action. There is such an opportunity on the LRTAP Convention calendar. During the week of November 29, 1999 there will be a Ministerial session of the Convention's Executive Body to sign a new Protocol on Nitrogen emissions. Announcing entry into force of the POPs and Heavy Metals protocols, at that time, should have a wide political appeal.

I would like to ask that you distribute this letter to our colleague Senior Arctic Officials (SAOs) in order to draw their attention to the opportunity presented by the Ministerial session of the LRTAP Convention's Executive Body in November as a target date to achieve a sufficient number of ratifications to bring the two Protocols into force. I also suggest that it would be useful to ask our colleagues for their reactions to this suggestion, and to ask if they see other opportunities to encourage non-Arctic States (as envisaged in the Alta Ministerial Declaration and the Regional Plan of Action). In the latter context, it would be particularly interesting to hear the thoughts of Finland, given the opportunities of their presidency role of the European Union.

I would much appreciate your assistance by distributing this letter to our colleagues as indicated above. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (613) 992-6588 or Mr. James Moore, Assistant Deputy Minister, Northern Affairs Program, at (819) 953-3760.

Yours sincerely,



Mary Simon
Ambassador for Circumpolar Affairs
Senior Arctic Official (Canada)