

e) **Convention on Prior Informed Consent (PIC)**

Concerns about the growth of international trade in chemicals during the 1960s and 1970s led to the development of two voluntary codes of conduct, one under the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) (dealing with the distribution and use of pesticides) and one under the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) (dealing with international trade in chemicals). These guidelines involve a PIC voluntary procedure, which is a formalized system used to obtain and disseminate decisions of countries regarding the import or the transit of chemicals covered by the procedure. The goal is to promote shared responsibility between exporting and importing countries with respect to the protection of human health and the environment from the harmful effects of certain chemicals and pesticides that are being traded internationally. Canada has supported the PIC procedure for years and has been actively implementing it as part of its commitment to both voluntary instruments.

Negotiations under the auspices of UNEP and FAO to develop a legally binding instrument for the application of the PIC procedure for certain hazardous chemicals and pesticides in international trade, based on the two existing voluntary instruments, were finally completed in March 1998. A final text was adopted in Rotterdam on September 11, 1998, and the "Rotterdam Convention" is now open for signature and ratification. Canada plans to sign before the end of the year.

As the Rotterdam Convention will enter into force only 90 days after the 50th ratification instrument is deposited, a resolution on interim arrangements was adopted in Rotterdam in order to ensure the continued operation of the voluntary procedure and to prepare for the rapid and effective operation of the Convention, once it comes into force. Those interim arrangements took effect on the date the Convention was opened for signature and will remain in effect until its entry into force.

f) **United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) Convention on Long-range Transboundary Air Pollution (LRTAP): Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs) and Negotiations for a Global Treaty on POPs**

In recent years, there has been a dramatic growth in chemical manufacturing and other human activities that result in the release of toxic pollutants. Many of these activities are essential to modern society; but they can also pose a serious threat to human health and the environment. Particularly challenging is a group of chemicals known as "persistent organic pollutants", or POPs. POPs are chemicals that are used as pesticides or in industry and that, to varying degrees, persist in the environment, accumulate in fatty tissues and are able to move long distances through the atmosphere.