Convention (1979) on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution: amendments to the 1998 Aarhus Protocol on persistent organic pollutants

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The Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted the report by Giovanni LA VIA (EPP, IT) on the draft Council decision on the acceptance of the Amendments to the 1998 Protocol to the 1979 Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution on Persistent Organic Pollutants.

The committee recommended the European Parliament to **give its consent** to acceptance of the Amendments to the Protocol.

To recall, the 1998 Aarhus Protocol on Persistent Organic Pollutants (the Protocol) aims to **control, reduce or eliminate discharges, emissions and losses of POPs**. It requires Parties to eliminate the production and use of relevant substances, restrict the use of dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), hexachlorocyclohexanes (HCH) and polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), and reduce their total annual emissions of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), dioxins/furans (PCDD/PCDF) and hexachlorobenzene (HCB) below their levels in 1990 or an alternative year between 1985 and 1995.

The accession of the Community to the Protocol was approved on behalf of the Community by Council Decision 2004/259/EC. The Protocol, which entered into force on 23 October 2003, has been transposed into EU law through several instruments.

In December 2009, the Protocol was amended by Decisions 2009/1, 2009/2, 2009/3 and 2009/4. The amended Protocol includes seven new substances, updates implementation requirements for several substances, updates restrictions for PCDD/PCDF emissions from several sources, and adds PCBs to the list of substances affected by the total annual emission restrictions and reporting obligations.

As set out in the short justification to the recommendation, **the draft Council Decision lists the texts of the amendments to the Protocol via Decisions 2009/1 and 2009/2 in its Annexes**. The amendments are fully consistent with existing EU legislation. Specific exemptions and flexible transition timetables for economies in transition should allow all Parties to comply with the Protocol.

The ratification of the amendments will be an important step towards a higher level of protection of human health and the environment from transboundary air pollution. Members therefore welcomed the draft Council Decision and proposed that Parliament gives its consent.