The Madrid Statement on Poly- and Perfluoroalkyl Substances (PFASs)

Blum, Arlene; Balan, Simona A.; Scheringer, Martin; Trier, Xenia; Goldenman, Greta; Cousins, Ian T.; Diamond, Miriam L.; Fletcher, Tony; Higgins, Christopher; Lindeman, Avery E.; Peaslee, Graham; de Voogt, Pim; Wang, Zhanyun; Weber, Roland

Published in:
Environmental Health Perspectives

Link to article, DOI:
10.1289/ehp.1509934

Publication date:
2015

Document Version
Publisher's PDF, also known as Version of record

Link back to DTU Orbit

Citation (APA):
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http://dx.doi.org/10.1289/ehp.1509934

As scientists and other professionals from a variety of disciplines, we are concerned about the production and release into the environment of an increasing number of poly- and perfluoroalkyl substances (PFASs) for the following reasons:

1. PFASs are man-made and found everywhere. PFASs are highly persistent, as they contain perfluorinated chains that only degrade very slowly, if at all, under environmental conditions. It is documented that some polyfluorinated chemicals break down to form perfluorinated ones (D’Eon and Mabury 2007).

2. PFASs are found in the indoor and outdoor environments, wildlife, and human tissue and bodily fluids all over the globe. They are emitted via industrial processes and military and firefighting operations (Darwin 2011; Fire Fighting Foam Coalition 2014), and they migrate out of consumer products into air (Shoeib et al. 2011), household dust ( Björklund et al. 2009), food (Begley et al. 2008; Titelemier et al. 2007; Trier et al. 2011), soil (Sepulvado et al. 2011; Strynar et al. 2012), ground and surface water, and make their way into drinking water (Eschauzier et al. 2011; Rahman et al. 2014).

3. In animal studies, some long-chain PFASs have been found to cause liver toxicity, disruption of lipid metabolism and the immune and endocrine systems, adverse neurobehavioral effects, neonatal toxicity and death, and tumors in multiple organ systems (Lau et al. 2007; Nelson et al. 2009), ulcerative colitis (Steenland et al. 2011), obesity (Haldorson et al. 2012), decreased hormone levels and delayed puberty (Lopez-Espinosa et al. 2011).

4. Due to their high persistence, global distribution, bioaccumulation potential, and toxicity, some PFASs have been listed under the Stockholm Convention (United Nations Environment Programme 2009) as persistent organic pollutants (POPs).

5. As documented in the Helsinki Statement (Scheringer et al. 2014),
   a. Although some of the long-chain PFASs are being regulated or phased out, the most common replacements are short-chain PFASs with similar structures, or compounds with fluorinated segments joined by ether linkages.
   b. While some shorter-chain fluorinated alternatives seem to be less bioaccumulative, they are still as environmentally persistent as long-chain substances or have persistent degradation products. Thus, a switch to short-chain and other fluorinated alternatives may not reduce the amounts of PFASs in the environment. In addition, because some of the shorter-chain PFASs are less effective, larger quantities may be needed to provide the same performance.
   c. While many fluorinated alternatives are being marketed, little information is publicly available on their chemical structures, properties, uses, and toxicological profiles.
   d. Increasing use of fluorinated alternatives will lead to increasing levels of stable perfluorinated degradation products in the environment, and possibly also in biota and humans. This would increase the risks of adverse effects on human health and the environment.

6. Initial efforts to estimate overall emissions of PFASs into the environment have been limited due to uncertainties related to product formulations, quantities of production, production locations, efficiency of emission controls, and long-term trends in production history (Wang et al. 2014).

7. The technical capacity to destroy PFASs is currently insufficient in many parts of the world.

Global action through the Montreal Protocol (United Nations Environment Programme 2012) successfully reduced the use of the highly persistent ozone-depleting chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), thus allowing for the recovery of the ozone layer. However, many of the organohalide replacements for CFCs are still of concern due to their high global warming potential. It is essential to learn from such past efforts and take measures at the international level to reduce the use of PFASs in products and prevent their replacement with fluorinated alternatives in order to avoid long-term harm to human health and the environment.

For these reasons, we call on the international community to cooperate in limiting the production and use of PFASs and in developing safer nonfluorinated alternatives. We therefore urge scientists, governments, chemical and product manufacturers, purchasing organizations, retailers, and consumers to take the following actions:

Scientists:

1. Assemble, in collaboration with industry and governments, a global inventory of all PFASs in use or in the environment, including precursors and degradation products, and their functionality, properties, and toxicology.
2. Develop analytical methods for the identification and quantification of additional families of PFASs, including fluorinated alternatives.
3. Continue monitoring for legacy PFASs and provide validated analytical methods for detection of PFASs, and improve methods for testing the safety of alternatives.
4. Work with industry to develop public registries of products containing PFASs.
5. Make public annual statistical data on production, imports, and exports of PFASs.
5. Whenever possible, avoid products containing, or manufactured using, PFASs in government procurement.

6. In collaboration with industry, ensure that an infrastructure is in place to safely transport, dispose of, and destroy PFASs and PFAS-containing products, and enforce these measures.

**Chemical manufacturers:**

1. Make data on PFASs publicly available, including chemical structures, properties, and toxicology.

2. Provide scientists with standard samples of PFASs, including precursors and degradation products, to enable environmental monitoring of PFASs.

3. Work with scientists and governments to develop safe disposal methods for PFASs.

4. Provide the supply chain with documentation on PFAS content and safe disposal guidelines.

5. Develop nonfluorinated alternatives that are neither persistent nor toxic.

**Product manufacturers:**

1. Stop using PFASs where they are non-essential or when safer alternatives exist.

2. Develop inexpensive and sensitive PFAS quantification methods for compliance testing.

3. Label products containing PFASs, including chemical identity and safe disposal guidelines.

4. Invest in the development and use of nonfluorinated alternatives.

**Purchasing organizations, retailers, and individual consumers:**

1. Whenever possible, avoid products containing, or manufactured using, PFASs. These include many products that are stain-resistant, waterproof, or nonstick.

2. Question the use of such fluorinated “performance” chemicals added to consumer products.

The views expressed in this statement are solely those of the authors and signatories. The authors declare they have no actual or potential competing financial interests.

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(Statements as of publication date. Institutional affiliations are provided for identification purposes only.)

Ovokoreye Abafe, Researcher, School of Chemistry and Physics, University of Kwazulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa
Marlene Agerstrand, PhD, Researcher, Department of Applied Environmental Science, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden
Lutz Ahrens, PhD, Research Scientist, Department of Aquatic Sciences and Assessment, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala, Sweden
Beatrix H. Aritziaibar, PhD, Professor, Department of Chemical Engineering, National University of Colombia, Manizales, Colombia
Abel Arkenbout, PhD, Chairman, Toxicowatch Foundation, Harlingen, the Netherlands
Misha Askren, MD, Physician, Urgent Care, Kaiser Permanente, Los Angeles, California, USA
Jannicke Bakkejord, Senior Engineer, National Institute of Nutrition and Seafood Research, Bergen, Norway
Georg Becker, PhD, Professor Emeritus, Department of Exposure and Risk Assessment, Norwegian Institute of Public Health, Oslo, Norway
Thea Bechshoft, PhD, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Southern Denmark, Odense, Denmark
Peter Behnisch, PhD, Director, BioDetection System, Amsterdam, the Netherlands
Susanne Bejerot, MD, Assistant Professor, Department of Clinical Neuroscience, Karolinska Institute, Stockholm, Sweden
Stephen Bent, MD, Associate Professor of Medicine, Epidemiology and Biostatistics, and Psychiatry, University of California at San Francisco, San Francisco, California, USA
Urs Berger, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Applied Environmental Science, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden
Åke Bergman, PhD, Executive Director and Professor, Swedish Toxicology Sciences Research Center, Södertälje, Sweden
Vladimir Beikoski, PhD, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Chemistry, University of Belgrade, Belgrade, Serbia
Emmanuelle Bichon, Scientific and Technical Support Manager, Oniris, Nantes-Atlantic College of Veterinary Medicine, Food Science and Engineering, Nantes, France
Filip Bjurid, PhD Student, Manor–Technology–Environment Research Centre, Orebro University, Orebro, Sweden
Tara Blank, PhD, Consultant, Elixir Environmental, Ridgefield, Connecticut, USA
Daniel Borg, PhD, Toxicology Consultant, Trossa AB, Stockholm, Sweden
Carl-Gustaf Bornehag, PhD, Professor, Department of Health and Environment, Karlstad University, Karlstad, Sweden
Hindrik Bouwmans, PhD, Lecturer, Zoology Group, North-West University, Mahikeng, South Africa
Lindsay Bramwell, MSc, Research Associate, Institute of Health and Society, Newcastle University, Newcastle upon Tyne, United Kingdom
Knut Breivik, PhD, Senior Scientist and Professor, NILU–Norwegian Institute for Air Research, Kjeller, Norway
Katja Broeg, PhD, Researcher, Baltic Sea Centre, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden
Phil Brown, PhD, University Distinguished Professor of Sociology and Health Sciences, and Director, Social Science Environmental Health Research Institute, Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts, USA
Thomas Bruton, MS, PhD Student, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, University of California, Berkeley, California, USA
David Camann, MS, Technical Advisor, Southwest Research Institute, San Antonio, Texas, USA
Louise Camenzuli, PhD Student, Safety and Environmental Technology Group, Institute for Chemical and Bioengineering, ETH Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland
Argelia Castano, PhD, Head of Department, Area of Environmental Toxicology, Instituto de Salud Carlos III, Majadahonda, Spain
Carmela Centeno, Industrial Development Officer, United Nations Industrial Development Organization, Vienna, Austria
Ibrahim Chahoud, PhD, Professor, Department of Toxicology, Charité–Universitätsmedizin Berlin, Berlin, Germany
Kai Hsien Chi, PhD, Associate Professor, Institute of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences, National Yang-Ming University, Taipei, Taiwan
Eliza Chin, MD, MPH, Executive Director, American Medical Women’s Association, Reston, Virginia, USA
Carsten Christophersen, PhD, Adjunct Professor, Systems Biology, Technical University of Denmark, Kongens Lyngby, Denmark
Theo Colborn (1927–2014), PhD, President Emeritus, TEDX (The Endocrine Disruption Exchange), Paonia, Colorado, USA
Terrence J. Collins, PhD, Theodore Heinzen Professor of Green Chemistry, Department of Chemistry, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA, USA; and Director, Institute for Green Science, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, USA
Johanna Congleton, MSPH, PhD, Senior Scientist, Environmental Working Group, Washington, DC, USA
Adrian Covaci, PhD, Professor, Toxicological Center, University of Anwerp, Anwerp, Belgium
Craig Criddle, PhD, Professor, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Stanford University, Stanford, California, USA
Oscar H. Fernandez Cubero, Technician, National Food Center, Majadahonda, Spain
Jordi Dachs, PhD, Research Scientist, Institute of Environmental Assessment and Water Research, Spanish Council for Scientific Research, Barcelona, Spain
Cynthia de Wit, PhD, Professor, Department of Applied Environmental Science, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden
Barbara Demeureix, PhD, DSc, Professor, Department KDDM, National Museum of Natural History, Paris, France
Pascal Diefenbacher, PhD Student, Safety and Environmental Technology Group, Institute for Chemical and Bioengineering, ETH Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland
Michelle Douskey, PhD, Chemistry Lecturer, Department of Chemistry, University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, California, USA
Timothy Elgren, PhD, Dean of Arts and Sciences, Oberlin College, Oberlin, Ohio, USA
David Epi, PhD, Professor Emeritus, Hopkins Marine Station, Stanford University, Pacific Grove, California, USA
Ulrika Eriksson, PhD Student, Man–Technology–Environment Research Centre, Orebro University, Orebro, Sweden
Alexi Ernstoff, MS, PhD Student, Quantitative Sustainability Assessment, Technical University of Denmark, Kongens Lyngby, Denmark
Igor Eulaers, PhD Student, Department of Biology, University of Antwerp, Anwerp, Belgium
Heesoo Eun, PhD, Senior Researcher, Division of Organochemicals, National Institute for Agro-Environmental Sciences, Tsukuba, Japan
Peter Fantke, PhD, Assistant Professor, Quantitative Sustainability Assessment Division, Department of Management Engineering, Technical University of Denmark, Kongens Lyngby, Denmark
Marko Filipovic, PhD, Head of Department of Applied Environmental Science, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden
Marie Frederiksen, Researcher, Danish Building Research Institute, Aalborg University, Copenhagen, Denmark
Carey Friedman, PhD, Postdoctoral Associate, Center for Global Change Science, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden
Frederic Gallo, PhD, Senior Expert, Regional Activity Center for Sustainable Consumption and Production, Barcelona, Spain
Joseph A. Gardella, Jr, PhD, Distinguished Professor and John and Frances Larkin Professor of Chemistry, Department of Chemistry, University of Buffalo–The State University of New York, Buffalo, New York, USA
Stephen Gardner, DVM, Veterinarian, Albany Animal Hospital, Richmond, California, USA
Caroline Gaus, PhD, Professor, National Centre for Environmental Toxicology, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia
Wouter Gebbink, PhD, Researcher, Department of Applied Environmental Science, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden
David Gee, PhD, Associate Fellow, Institute of Health, Environment, and Beliefs, Brunel University, Brunel, United Kingdom
Philip Germandefer, DHC Che, MSc, Chief, Director of International Sales and Marketing, Fluid Management Systems, Inc., Watertown, Massachusetts, USA
Bondi Neuma Gevao, PhD, Research Scientist, Kuwait Institute for Scientific Research, Safat, Kuwait
Melissa Gomis, MS, PhD Student, Department of Environmental Science, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden
Belen Gonzalez, PhD Student, Institute of Environmental Assessment and Water Research, Spanish Council for Scientific Research, Barcelona, Spain
Peter Gringeri, MSc, Principal, Cardio, Santos, Victoria, Australia
Adam Grochowski, PhD, Professor, Department of Analytical Chemistry, Krakow University of Technology, Krakow, Poland
Ramon Guardians, Scientific Advisor, Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Environment, Madrid, Spain
Alexey Gusev, PhD, Senior Scientist, European Monitoring and Evaluation Programme Meteorological Synthesizing Centre—East, Moscow, Russia
Arno Gutleb, PhD, Project Leader, Department of Environment and Agro-Biotechnologies, Luxembourg Institute of Science and Technology, Belvaux, Luxembourg
Tenzing Gyalpo, PhD Student, Safety and Environmental Technology Group, Institute for Chemical and Bioengineering, ETH Zurich, Zurich, Switzerland
Johannes Hadrach, PhD, Head, Research Laboratory, European Union Reference Laboratory for Dioxins and PCBs in Feed and Food, Freiburg, Germany

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(Signatories as of publication date. Institutional affiliations are provided for identification purposes only.)

Helen Håkansson, PhD, Professor of Toxicology and Chemicals Health Risk Assessment, Institute of Environmental Medicine, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden

Tomas Hansson, PhD, Researcher, Department of Applied Environmental Science, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

Mikael Harju, PhD, Senior Scientist, NILU—Norwegian Institute for Air Research, Tromsø, Norway

Stuart Harrad, PhD, Professor of Environmental Chemistry, School of Geography, Earth and Environmental Sciences, University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, United Kingdom

Bernhard Henning, PhD, Professor of Nutrition and Toxicology, and Director, University of Kentucky Superfund Research Center, Lexington, Kentucky, USA

Eunha Hoh, PhD, Associate Professor, Department of Public Health, San Diego State University, San Diego, California, USA

Sandra Huber, PhD, Senior Researcher, Environmental Chemistry, NILU—Norwegian Institute for Air Research, Tromsø, Norway

François Idauz, Direction de la Surveillance de l’Environnement, Institut Scientifique de Service Public (ISSeP), Liege, Belgium

Alastair Iles, SJD, Associate Professor, Department of Environmental Policy, Theory, and Management, University of California, Berkeley, California, USA

Ellen Ingre-Khans, MSc, Scientist, California Department of Health, Ghent University, Brussels, Belgium

Jonathan Martin, PhD, Professor, Department of Environmental Toxicology, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

Lisa Melynk, PhD, Junior Researcher, Research Center for Toxic Compounds in the Environment, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

Annelle Mendez, PhD Student, Safety and Environmental Technology Group, Institute for Chemical and Bioengineering, ETH Zürich, Zürich, Switzerland

Tom Muir, MS, Consultant (retired), Environment Canada, Burlington, Ontario, Canada

Magdalena Mulder, PhD Student, Research Center for Toxic Compounds in the Environment, Faculty of Science, Masaryk University, Brno, Czech Republic

Jochen Müller, PhD, Professor, National Research Centre for Environmental Toxicology, The University of Queensland, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

Patricia Murphy, ND, LAc, Nanopathologist, Portland, Oregon, USA

Takeshi Nakano, PhD, Specially Appointed Professor, Graduate School of Engineering, Osaka University, Osaka, Japan

Amgul Anatagoor, Associate Professor, Department of Chemistry, National University of Mongolia, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia

Seth Newton, PhD Student, Department of Applied Environmental Science, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

Carla Ng, PhD, Senior Scientist, Safety and Environmental Technology Group, Institute for Chemical and Bioengineering, ETH Zürich, Zurich, Switzerland

Bo Normander, PhD, Executive Director, Worldwatch Institute Europe, Copenhagen, Denmark

Kees Olie, PhD, Retired, Institute for Biodiversity and Ecosystem Dynamics, Amsterdam, the Netherlands

Bindu Panikkar, PhD, Research Associate, Arctic Institute of North America, Calgary, Alberta, Canada

Richard Peterson, PhD, Professor, Department of Pharmaceutical Sciences, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin, USA

Arianna Piersanti, PhD, Lead Chemist, Food of Environmental Control Department, Istituto Zootopolettico Sperimentale dell’Umbria e dell’Marche, Perugia, Italy

Merle Plassmann, PhD, Researcher, Department of Applied Environmental Science, Stockholm University, Stockholm, Sweden

Anuschka Polder, PhD, Scientist, Department of Food Safety and Infection Biology, Norwegian University of Life Sciences, Oslo, Norway
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(Signatories as of publication date. Institutional affiliations are provided for identification purposes only.)