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Climate change amplifying impact of toxic pollutants

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Climate change is increasing the vulnerability of life on Earth to persistent organic pollutants (POPs), a UN research team concluded in a major study previewed at the international climate change talks in Cancun in December 2010. ¹



Credit: © Greenpeace / Marc Serota

POPs include polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs) and other toxic chemicals that resist environmental degradation, can be transported long distances by air and water, and accumulate in the food chain.

The UN report coincides with a new atmospheric monitoring program – centred on 12 organic pollutants, including the pesticides DDT and dieldrin – run by scientists at CSIRO Marine and Atmospheric Research.

Previous research by CSIRO established that levels of several atmospheric pollutants were highest in the Australian atmosphere during and after wild or controlled bushfires, or controlled burn-offs. Australia is required to report its data to the UN by 2015.

¹ http://photo.greenpeace.org/GPI/C.aspx?VP3=ViewBox_VPage&VBID=27MZV8PQS13K&IT=ZoomImage01_VForm&IID=27MZIFLKSKSK&PN=14&CT=Search

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