

# US companies DuPont and Chemours generated extensive contamination with toxic “forever chemicals” in North Carolina: UN experts

**21 February 2024**

GENEVA (21 February 2024) – American chemical companies DuPont and Chemours have discharged toxic per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) into the local environment, completely disregarding the rights and wellbeing of residents along the lower Cape Fear River in North Carolina, UN experts\* said today.

Members of communities have reportedly been denied access to clean and safe water for decades. “Even as DuPont and Chemours had information about the toxic impacts of PFAS on human health and drinking water, the companies continued to produce and discharge PFAS,” the experts said.

“DuPont and Chemours have produced, marketed and profited from PFAS for decades, contributing to a global toxic contamination problem”, the experts said. The UN Environment Assembly meeting next week should address the serious risks and harms posed by PFAS for communities around the world.

Personal care products like shampoo or floss and cosmetics like nail polish and eye makeup as well as some plastics, grease-resistant paper, fast food containers, stain-resistant coatings on carpets, upholstery and other fabrics, all contain PFAS.

PFAS are a class of toxic chemicals also known as forever chemicals because they are highly persistent, meaning that they do not easily degrade in nature and can cause harm for decades, even centuries.

The UN experts expressed alarm at the exports of PFAS-hazardous waste from The Netherlands to the United States, in apparent breach of international law.

“DuPont and Chemours appear to have impermissibly captured the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and delayed its efforts to properly regulate PFAS chemicals,” the experts said.

“Health and environmental regulators in the United States have fallen short in their duty to protect against business-related human rights abuses, including providing the public, particularly affected communities in North Carolina, with the type and amount of information necessary to prevent harm and seek reparation,” the experts said. “Where legal action has been taken against the two companies, enforcement and remediation measures have been inadequate,” they said.

Shortcomings by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality, and the courts undermine community’s right to information and their right to an effective remedy. The experts [raised these concerns](#) with the US Government which is yet to reply.

The UN experts sent letters to [DuPont](#) and [Chemours](#). In their replies, [DuPont](#) and [Chemours](#) explained how they have changed their corporate structures and operations. In this regard, the experts expressed their apprehension at how this corporate restructuring has posed further obstacles to achieving accountability and effective remedies. Corporate restructuring should not lead to impunity for human rights abuses, the experts said.

The UN experts also expressed grave concern at reports that Chemours had applied to the North Carolina Department of Environmental Quality for an air permit to expand its PFAS production.

The experts said the companies continue to spread disinformation about PFAS. For example, PFAS are being touted as essential for semiconductors and plastics needed in the energy transition and the fight against climate change. “[Decarbonization strategies must be integrated with detoxification strategies and guided by human rights](#)” the experts said.

ENDS

\*The experts: **Marcos A. Orellana**, [Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights](#); **David R. Boyd**, [Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment](#); **Pedro Arrojo-Agudo**, [Special Rapporteur on the human rights to safe drinking water and sanitation](#); **Michael Fakhri**, [Special Rapporteur on the right to food](#); **Damilola Olawuyi** (Chairperson), **Robert McCorquodale** (Vice-Chairperson), **Elżbieta Karska**, **Fernanda Hopenhaym**, and **Pichamon Yeophantong**, [Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises](#)

The Special Rapporteurs are part of what is known as the [Special Procedures](#) of the Human Rights Council. Special Procedures, the largest body of independent experts in the UN Human Rights system, is the general name of the Council’s independent fact-finding and monitoring mechanisms that address either specific country situations or thematic issues in all parts of the world. Special Procedures’ experts work on a voluntary basis; they are not UN staff and do not receive a salary for their work. They are independent from any government or organization and serve in their individual capacity.

For more information and media requests please contact: Ms. Noura Humoud A. AlZaid ([noura.alzaid@un.org](mailto:noura.alzaid@un.org)).

For **media inquiries** related to other UN independent experts, please contact Maya Derouaz ([maya.derouaz@un.org](mailto:maya.derouaz@un.org)) or Dharisha Indraguptha ([dhariasha.indraguptha@un.org](mailto:dhariasha.indraguptha@un.org)).

Follow news related to the UN’s independent human rights experts on Twitter (X) [@UN\\_SPExperts](#).