



Press statement

## EU Council ignores the European Parliament on substituting dangerous chemicals

**Brussels, 27 June 2006** - Environmental, women's, health and consumer organisations are very concerned that the Council Common Position on the future EU chemicals law –REACH- will not protect people and the environment from toxic chemicals. We believe that the loopholes in the Council text, which was rubber-stamped today by Environment ministers, give cause for serious doubt that REACH will be an improvement on current chemicals legislation.

The Council Common Position fails to take account of the European Parliament's First Reading position to substitute hazardous chemicals with safer alternatives, whenever possible. It would allow carcinogens, chemicals that are toxic to reproduction (e.g. the phthalate DEHP) and hormone-disrupting substances (e.g. bisphenol A) to stay on the market, even if safer alternatives exist. This loophole represents little change from the current, flawed system, which has failed to control the most dangerous chemicals and hinders safe, innovative products from entering the market.

The Council text also drastically reduces safety information that chemical producers would be obliged to supply, particularly for substances produced in low quantities. Thousands of chemicals could thus stay on the market, despite no health information being available. This, too, reduces the likelihood of identifying safer alternatives and taking precautionary action on chemicals.

The NGOs urge the European Parliament to reaffirm its support for the substitution principle during Second Reading. We anticipate that substitution will become the main area of contention, together with a legally binding duty of care and greater access to information. Only when these principles are fully endorsed by the EU institutions deciding on REACH will European citizens and the environment benefit from the new EU chemicals legislation.

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