



## **REACH – European Parliament committee backs safer chemicals rules**

Brussels, 10 October 2006 – Environmental, women’s, health and consumer organisations see today’s Environment Committee vote on the new EU chemicals law (REACH) as a vital step towards protecting health and the environment from chemical contamination. The Committee strongly supported the substitution of hazardous chemicals whenever safer alternatives are available.

The vote reflects cross-party support for the substitution principle and re-confirms a decision made by the entire assembly last November, which has so far been ignored by the Council of Ministers. It sends a strong message back to the Council that MEPs remain determined that chemicals of very high concern should be replaced with safer alternatives whenever possible. This legal obligation is essential to drive innovation of safer chemicals, in order to end the build-up of harmful substances in our bodies and the environment - one of the key objectives of REACH.

The groups also welcome the Environment Committee’s decision to ensure that a legally binding “duty of care” applies to all chemicals, making chemical producers responsible for the safety of their products, as well as the Committee’s backing for more information for consumers about chemicals in everyday products.

They call on Ministers and the European Commission to endorse the European Parliament’s position in discussions over the coming weeks. Intense pressure from the chemical industry to date has resulted in severe loopholes in the law, say the groups. Now, substitution of all the most hazardous chemicals is the only chance for decision-makers to enable REACH to improve the protection of human health and the environment beyond current legislation.

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