

PRESS RELEASE



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NGO list aims to rid market of chemicals of high concern

Brussels 17 September 2008 – Public interest organisations today released a list of “high concern” chemicals currently available on the market. The aim is to speed up implementation of REACH, the new EU chemicals law by encouraging companies to make sound substitution decisions.(1)

In the first undertaking of its kind, an international coalition of non-governmental organisations (1) have developed the so-called REACH SIN List (for Substitute It Now!), containing nearly 300 chemicals such as the plastic building block Bisphenol A, the brominated flame retardant DecaBDE, and the phthalate DEHP. The SIN List is available online at www.sinlist.org

This SIN List will be presented to more than 70 multinational companies at a high-profile conference in Brussels today. (2) Representatives from Sony-Ericsson, H&M and Dell will describe their efforts to identify and phase out the use of hazardous substances and the benefits to business.

Per Rosander, Director of ChemSec, the NGO at the centre of the SIN-project, explains:

The SIN List is the first collaborative effort to identify substances that meet the official REACH criteria for authorisation. For chemicals that are carcinogenic, persistent, bioaccumulative, the time for precautionary action is now! Companies need to take a proactive approach to replace these known culprits with safer alternatives.

Through REACH, the 27 EU member states have jointly committed to establish a list of Substances of Very High Concern or SVHCs, i.e. chemicals that cause cancer, birth defects, and other serious health effects and which persist in the environment and accumulate in our bodies. However, so far Member States have nominated only 16 high concern chemicals in the official process. (3)

The objective of the public interest organisations involved in developing the SIN List is to push for strict implementation of EU chemical legislation, and to provide guidance to European authorities, companies and consumers for taking action on the listed chemicals. (4)

Nardono Nimpuno, Senior Policy Advisor at ChemSec argues that the list will provide a powerful tool for companies that are not content with bare minimum compliance, but who want to get ahead of both regulation and the competition.

“Companies closest to the end-user and consumer know that things have to change. They have already turned to public interest organisations for advice. At this meeting, some of them will share case studies of how anticipating consumer demand for safer products has made them both more innovative and more competitive.”

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Notes for journalists

1. ChemSec (International Chemical Secretariat) has produced the SIN list in collaboration with an NGO Advisory Committee made up of European Environmental Bureau (EEB), WWF European Policy Office, Friends of the Earth Europe, Greenpeace European Office, Instituto Sindical de Trabajo Ambiente y Salud (ISTAS), European Consumers' Organisation (BUEC), Women in Europe for a Common Future, Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL), USA, and the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL).
2. Invitation including agenda for the meeting is available at www.chemsec.org
Geert Dancet, ECHA will speak at 11 am followed by the presentation of the SIN List. Journalists are invited to attend the lunch between 13.00-15.00 where Per Rosander, director of the International Chemicals Secretariat, will be available for interviews.
3. EU chemicals legislation known as REACH (Regulation on Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals), is the European procedure for ensuring the sound management of chemicals. The authorisation process of REACH requires producers or importers of the most hazardous substances to obtain a special permission before placing them on the market. Authorisation identifies the Substances of Very High Concern (SVHCs) and information on such chemicals has to be communicated along the entire supply chain, down to consumers. This aspect of REACH helps empower European consumers to make informed choices and move away from products containing such SVHCs.
4. For example, NGO advisory members, Health and Environment Alliance and Friends of the Earth Europe say Bisphenol A, a known endocrine disruptor used in the production of some plastic baby bottles, should be removed from the market. Infants exposed to Bisphenol A may be more likely to develop cancer in later life. For further information on Bisphenol A (BPA) or copies of the brochure for consumers contact David Azoulay, Friends of the Earth Europe (david.azoulay@foeeurope.org) or Lisette van Vliet, Health and Environment Alliance (lisette@env-health.org)

ChemSec, the International Chemical Secretariat, strives to bridge the gap between decision-makers and industry, working with stakeholders from industry, NGOs and policy circles, offering expertise and guidance on chemical management policies.

The Secretariat is a non-profit organization dedicated to working towards a toxic free environment. In 2002 ChemSec was created by environmental organizations and the Secretariat is funded by grants from authorities and foundations. Please visit us at www.chemsec.org.