



25 May 2007

Commissioner Dimas  
European Commission  
200, Rue de la Loi  
B-1049 Brussels

Commissioner Günter Verheugen  
European Commission  
200, Rue de la Loi  
B-1049 Brussels

Cc: Geert Dancet, Interim Acting Director, European Chemicals Agency

Open letter

Dear Commissioners,

After nine years of debate, REACH finally enters into force next week. Even though the law will move Europe towards a new approach to chemicals regulation, we believe that it is far too early to celebrate. REACH has flaws and loopholes and is vulnerable to further weakening in the future.

Many key decisions on identifying and regulating hazardous chemicals are still to be taken pending future reviews. These include legislative proposals on the criteria to identify persistent and bioaccumulative chemicals as well as recognising that chemicals that disrupt our hormonal system cannot be “adequately controlled” and should be substituted by safer alternatives whenever possible. We call on you today to ensure that the forthcoming reviews are used to strengthen the law so as to guarantee a high level of protection of human health and the environment. In addition, we urge the Commission to make sure that the REACH regulation will be fully and correctly implemented.

Equally critical for the success of REACH is the establishment of the new European Chemicals Agency in Helsinki - due to be operational in June 2008. We expect the Agency to operate independently of the chemical industry and to defend the public interest in terms of health, environmental and worker protection by stimulating green innovation and by overseeing the enforcement of the legislation.

European environmental, women's, health and consumer groups therefore urge you to ensure that, over the coming months and years, the Agency will:

- Guarantee that members of the Management Board and Agency Committees do not have conflicts of interest;
- Make sure that NGO observers to the Agency's bodies have access to all relevant documents and meetings;
- Make decisions in a transparent way;

- Use the REACH system to act against the use of chemicals of very high concern and to phase them out, rather than simply preserve the status quo.

We will continue to closely monitor the forthcoming REACH implementation process, the legislative reviews as well as the Agency itself to ensure that REACH achieves the necessary protection for human health and the environment. Without the strong support of the Commission to encourage substitution, hazardous chemicals will continue to contaminate wildlife, our homes and our bodies, innovation towards safer alternatives will not receive the necessary boost and REACH will prove a failure.

Yours sincerely,

JOHN HONTELEZ

on behalf of the following organisations

