Human health, environment, sustainable development: chemicals policy. White Paper

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The Council held a public debate concerning the legislative package required for the implementation of the Commission's White Paper on a new chemicals policy at Union level. The debate was held on the basis of a paper drawn up by the Presidency in preparation of the in-depth discussions and negotiations the Council is expected to have on this matter during 2003. The paper focused the debate on the following key issues: - the scope of the new authorisation system (what substances should be covered?); - type of sanctions (how to apply the principle of no data no marketing?); - chemical substances in products imported into, as well as produced in the Union (which consumer goods to include in the regulation; e.g. toys, textiles, electronics?); - the situation of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) and downstream users. Following the discussion, the president concluded that there was consensus among the delegations on the consensus on the importance of the subject matter and that four questions raised by the paper were essential. Moreover, he concluded that carcinogens, mutagens and reprotoxic chemicals (so-called CMRs), as well as Persistent Organic Pollutants (POPs), such as persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic chemicals (PBT) and very persistent and very bioaccumulative chemicals (vPvB), should be considered in future proposals, with special attention being given to endocrine disrupters. Delegations agreed on the principle of replacing those chemicals presenting most danger with safer alternative substances and that the lack of adequate data for registration should imply banning the marketing of those substances. There was also broad support for specific guidance to be directed at SMEs to assist with the implementation of future legislation. The Council adopted the following conclusions in preparation of the 22nd Meeting of the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) Governing Council which is due to take place in February 2003: The Council underlines that safe management of chemicals is of high priority for the European Union as reflected in other EU programmes and policies such as the 6th Environmental Action Programme and that the European Union is ready to move the international agenda on chemicals forward through supporting continued efforts particularly by UNEP in close co-operation with the Intergovernmental Forum for Chemical Safety. The Council calls on the Commission to finalise its analysis of the Globally Harmonised System (GHS) for Classification and Labelling of chemicals and thereafter to put forward appropriate proposals to introduce this system into the new EU chemicals legislation.