

PRESS Briefing

Nernstweg 32, 22765 Hamburg, Tel. 040-399 19 10-0, Fax -390 75 20, info@pan-germany.org, www.pan-germany.org

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Environmental NGOs urge EU ministers to improve biocide laws to protect environment

With the Environment Council meeting in Brussels on 22 December 2009, thirteen European environment, nature and consumer protection NGOs underline their key demands affecting revision of EU biocide legislation.

We urge EU environment ministers to strengthen the draft biocide regulation using established environmental standards, with consistent provisions for excluding and substituting very problematic active substances and products plus a clear deadline for introducing an EU framework for sustainable biocide use to minimise the risks of biocidal products to consumers and ecosystems and to promote sound alternatives.

Biocides are widely applied for non-agricultural uses to combat harmful or unwanted organisms, in the form of wood preservatives, in treated textiles, antibacterial cleaning agents, insect repellents and disinfectants.

These products can potentially harm non-targeted beings including humans, endangered birds and mammals. For example, they can be cancerogenic, they can be toxic to the human reproductive system and they can interfere with human hormones. Various harmful experiences resulting from biocide release have been documented. The use of the antifouling agent TBT (Tributyltin) has been one of the most problematic cases in previous years which has had a serious impact on the marine environment. Other hazardous substances have also been detected in drinking water sources.

Data on the marketing of biocides are insufficient or out-of-date. An estimated 400,000 tonnes of biocides and 50,000 different biocidal products are sold in the EU each year. Many biocides are not used in closed systems but are released into the environment when they are applied or disposed of (e.g. in run-off or waste water). To date, there has been no specific and systematic monitoring of the environmental impact of biocide use.

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Further information: Christian Schweer, Tel. + 49 – 3991910-24, mobile: 01577/ 4934476

Email: christian.schweer@pan-germany.org

Background information:

[Key NGO demands concening revision of biocides legislation, 16 December 2009](#)

[Position and recommendations by PAN Germany concerning the Commission's draft biocide regulation, 26 November 2009](#)

