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DOCUMENTS REVEAL US GOVERNMENT CAMPAIGN TO UNDERMINE EUROPEAN UNION CHEMICALS POLICY

70 public interest groups call on Bush Administration to stop lobbying on behalf of chemical industry

September 9, 2003. Washington, DC -- A new report released today documents an ambitious, wide-ranging campaign by the US government to interfere with European Union efforts to reform chemical policy. The report provides new details about a story that broke today in the Wall Street Journal entitled "U.S. Opposes EU Effort to Test Chemicals for Health Hazards."

The Journal story and the report released today by Environmental Health Fund are based on a series of internal government documents that lay out a multi-agency effort by the EPA, State Dept., Commerce Dept. and USTR to weaken EU chemical policy reforms on behalf of the chemical industry.

"This report paints a chilling picture of how the Bush Administration is intervening in the regulatory process of sovereign nations at the behest of the industry. As these documents show, the US government essentially operated as a branch office of the chemical industry," said Joe DiGangi, PhD, author of the report. "This merits a full Congressional investigation into the corporate influence over government actions at the relevant agencies and raises questions about the objectives of US foreign policy."

Also today, more than 70 health care organizations and environmental groups responded by calling on President Bush to stop using federal funds to try to weaken the European Union's new chemicals policy, which they hailed as an important international initiative to protect public health.

"We are writing to express our deep concerns about the United States government efforts to undermine proposed reforms of the European Union chemicals policy," states a letter to President Bush signed by a wide range of groups including the Massachusetts Nursing Association, Catholic Healthcare West, Physicians for Social Responsibility, Natural Resources Defense Council, World Wildlife Fund, Institute for Children's Environmental Health and Health Care Without Harm.

The new EU chemicals policy – called REACH, for Registration, Evaluation, and Authorization of Chemicals – would require industry to provide basic health and environmental data for the tens of thousands of chemicals currently on the market that have never been properly evaluated. These untested and unregulated chemicals are accumulating in human body tissue and breast milk. Research indicates that exposures to even low doses of certain chemicals can result in profound but subtle effects including birth defects, reproductive disorders, and neurological abnormalities.

"We urge the U.S. government to recognize the potential benefits (of REACH) to American consumers and businesses and cease all efforts to undermine EU chemicals policy reforms. We request that the Administration solicit public comments from the American people to formulate a forward-looking position on chemicals policy to prepare for new economic realities of the 21st century," said the letter to Bush signed by the 70-plus groups.

The report and sign on letter are posted at www.cleanproduction.org and www.noharm.org.

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