COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

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NOTE

from:	General Secretariat of the Council
to:	Delegations
Subject:	EU work on Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals - Information from the Swedish and French delegations

Delegations will find attached a note from the Swedish and French delegations on the above item, which will be dealt with under "Other business" at the meeting of the Council (Environment) on 10 October 2011.

ANNEX

EU work on Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals
- Note from the Swedish and French delegations -

- Sweden and France welcome the 4th report on the implementation of the "Community Strategy for Endocrine Disrupters" and would like to invite the Commission to present in more detail the various actions envisaged.

- More and more evidence suggests that certain chemicals, known as endocrine disruptors, could harm human reproduction, affect the unborn child and also affect the child's later development. It is not rare for these chemicals to be constituents of products (e.g. cosmetics, furniture, toys, textiles, household utensils) used in the everyday lives of adults and children.

- In the view of the Swedish and French governments, there should be no doubts whatsoever that the products that our children consume are safe. There is an urgent need to move from identification and risk assessment of endocrine disrupting chemicals towards comprehensive risk management measures - ad-hoc as well as systematic - for the protection of future generations.

Background

Our functioning endocrine systems are crucial in maintaining many physiological functions. Substances that disrupt the body's endocrine system may give rise to a number of different effects such as reproductive disturbance or malformation, cancer, diabetes, cardio-vascular diseases, brittle-bone disease and damage to the immune system and nervous system, of which the latter in turn may lead to behavioural effects. There are several reasons why children and adolescents may be more vulnerable than adults to the effects of chemicals. A number of hormonal systems interact to ensure normal development. The rapid development of the unborn child is particularly sensitive to disturbance. But development continues until and throughout puberty.

Studies have demonstrated that, depending on the dose, chemicals can cause harm of this kind in animals. Studies from the United States and Denmark report that children have shown significantly earlier onset of puberty that might be related to exposure to endocrine disruptors.

The extent to which this impact on humans can be linked to exposure to chemicals is still unclear.

The Council conclusions of 22 December 2009, on combination effects of chemicals, recognise that such effects, including reproductive toxicity and other adverse effects from endocrine disrupters, can have serious negative implications for human health and the environment. In the conclusions, the Commission is invited to, inter alia, make recommendations as to how exposure to multiple endocrine disruptors should be further addressed within relevant Community legislation, and report back to the Council by early 2012.

Several regulatory initiatives have been taken ad-hoc to eliminate exposure, especially of children. In spring 2010, several countries (Canada, Denmark, France) adopted national bans on bisphenol A in baby bottles made from polycarbonate plastic. An EU-wide ban on its use in baby bottles, on the basis of the precautionary principle, was decided in November 2010. Denmark has banned the use of two common preservatives (parabens) in cosmetic products for children up to three years old.
The French Agency for Environmental Health Safety published on 27 September a new report on the effects of bisphenol A based on the latest scientific studies, and the French authorities are seriously considering measures such as national bans on products containing BPA.
In August 2010, the Swedish government asked the Swedish Chemicals Agency, in collaboration with the National Food Agency, to investigate and evaluate the need and prospects for a national ban on BPA. The authorities have proposed a number of measures aiming, as far as possible, to protect children against BPA exposure arising from various sources (food contact materials, thermal paper, relining of water pipes, toys and medical equipment for neonatal care)[1]. The Swedish Government is currently considering these proposals.
The Commission has recently published its 4th report on the implementation of the "Community Strategy for Endocrine Disrupters"[2], including a chapter (7.) on Future developments.

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1 Bisfenol A- rapport från ett regeringsuppdrag. KemI Rapport Nr 2/11 (English Summary).

2 Commission Staff Working Paper - 4th report on the implementation of the "Community Strategy for Endocrine Disrupters" - a range of substances suspected of interfering with the hormone systems of humans and wildlife (COM (1999) 706). Council of the European Union, Brussels 11 August 2011, 13461/11).

Sweden and France welcome the report and would like to invite the Commission to present in more detail the various actions envisaged in the report, specifically:

- progress of the major report on the state of the art of Endocrine Disruptors,
- how the Commission plans to use this report in relation to the development of criteria for the identification of Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals within the different pieces of Community legislation, and
- status of the review of the existing strategy.