



To: President Ursula Von der Leyen

CC: First Executive Vice-President Frans Timmermans

European Commission, Rue de la Loi 200, Brussels

28 September 2022

Re: High time to make certain that the EU is on the right path to a toxic-free environment

We, the undersigned, warmly welcome the European Commission's commitment to health, environmental and economic resilience, and a toxic-free environment. The publication in 2020 of the **Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability** shows the European Commission's willingness to serve its citizens, to protect their health and the environment by bringing about future-proof policy solutions. The chemicals strategy is a truly transformative agenda, driving the detoxification and decarbonisation of our economies, while creating millions of jobs.

We believe that the European Commission is steering the European policy on the right track despite the challenges of the recent crises of the Covid-19 pandemic and Russia's illegal invasion of Ukraine. The EU is now facing the energy crisis, very high gas, electricity and fuel bills, increasing overall cost of living and prospects for a worrying winter.

In times of crisis, there is a temptation to curb the green agenda and not heed the voices of citizens given the urgency to act. We applaud your resilience when facing the pressure to put on hold the EU's chemical policy reform. Earlier this month, in your 'State of the European Union' speech, you showed that Europe stays true to the European Green Deal, including its zero pollution and toxic-free commitments. Indeed, it is high time to strengthen the chemicals regulation but it's also clear that the pressure to delay reform is now increasing. We call on you to continue to withstand the pressure and use these crises as an opportunity for change. The level of exposure to harmful chemicals has never been more concerning - women, men and children are highly contaminated. This was recently confirmed by the European wide human biomonitoring study, HBM4EU. It is well-known by now that man-made chemicals contribute to the rise in severe health problems such as, among others, cancers, developmental disorders of children, reduced fertility, diabetes and obesity. The planetary boundaries have already been crossed, ringing an alarm bell that must be heard and followed by swift action.

While we see it as our duty to hear the call and act on it, certain major chemical corporations, which are responsible for many of our environmental problems (not only pollution but also climate and biodiversity loss crises), demand to freeze reforms despite the record benefits of the last years.

There is no Green Deal without curbing chemical pollution. The promised revisions of REACH and CLP offer a unique opportunity to achieve greater protection for EU citizens, especially for the most vulnerable groups such as (unborn) children and (pregnant) women. This reform is also necessary in order to support progressive companies that are currently struggling to survive.

But if the promised reforms are not tabled on time, they will not progress by the end of this Commission and Parliament term and mandate. This creates not only delays but major uncertainty on commitments and fuels scepticism as to the level of your commitment to the European Green Deal, undermining the legacy you are trying to build. Even a few months of delay in the promised REACH and CLP reforms in practice could mean years of prolonged pollution.

Therefore, we call on you, as EU decision-makers, to **stay on track and stick to the deadlines for regulatory reforms of CLP by October 2022 and REACH by March 2023 at the latest.**

In this critical hour, the chemical industry must transition to safe and sustainable chemicals, engage in decarbonisation, and finally clean up its pollution. Otherwise, their investments will lock them and the society as a whole, on a pathway that remains toxic. As such, we risk missing the biggest opportunity for change in the last 50 years.

Now more than ever, we need your commitment to make the European Green Deal 'the person on the moon moment' that you envisioned, and that the EU's young generation is hoping for. Achieving such a future requires ambition and the determination to make the right political decisions at the right time.

**The REACH and CLP reforms are critical to the achievement of a toxic-free environment. We trust you to deliver these reforms and we are willing to support you in this assiduous journey.**

We would greatly appreciate taking the time over a meeting with your cabinet to discuss further details of this important matter.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Yours sincerely,



Patrick ten Brink, Secretary General

On behalf of:

Arnika - Toxics and Waste Programme

CHEM Trust

Child Rights International Network (CRIN)

ClientEarth

Corporate Europe Observatory

Green Transition Denmark

ECOCITY-Greece

European Environmental Bureau (EEB)

Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

National Society of Conservationists - Friends of the Earth Hungary

Tegengif - The Netherlands

Center For International Environmental Law (CIEL)

Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) Europe

Plastic Soup Foundation

Réseau Environnement Santé (RES)- France

WECF, Women Engage for a Common Future

ZERO - Association for the Sustainability of the Earth System- Portugal

Zero Waste Europe