



BRUSSELS, 4 October 2024

To: Permanent representations of EU Member States – to the attention of EU Ministers of Environment,

CC Ministers of Health

Subject: 14 October Council of EU Environment ministers – Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability: upholding commitment to health protection objectives

Dear Minister / Permanent representative,

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL), an alliance of over 80 member organisations working for better health through a healthier environment, is writing to you today to ask for your support in the forthcoming October Environment Council.

Four years ago, on 14 October 2020, the EU Commission adopted its Chemicals Strategy for Sustainability (CSS), placing the commitment for a high level of health and environment protection at the heart of this long-term vision for EU chemicals policy and towards a toxic-free environment. The CSS was endorsed by the Environment Council in March 2021. In the June 2024 Council conclusions on the mid-term review of the 8th environment programme, the Environment Council “urges the Commission to keep a high level of ambition in the implementation of the strategy” and reiterates the commitment towards a toxic-free environment as the basis for the promotion of a sustainable, competitive and resilient EU industry.

HEAL is now calling on your support and leadership to ensure that these commitments for a high level of health and environment protection will remain at the heart of the 2024-2029 EU Commission mandate, including delivering on the health protective measures promised in the CSS and the revision of REACH with no further delay. Both health and environment ministers committed to address this triple crisis of climate, biodiversity and pollution and its impact on health in the Budapest [Declaration](#) on Environment and Health adopted at the seventh Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health of the World Health Organization (WHO) European Region in July 2023.

We call on your leadership to support a health protective implementation of the CSS and promote actions for the effective implementation of the Budapest Declaration during the 14 October Council.

You can also make a strong case on how action to reduce exposure to dangerous chemicals present everywhere in our daily life is also essential from an economic point of view and brings significant health benefits.

- [According to the European Chemicals Agency](#), the public health benefits of restricting the manufacture and use of harmful chemicals in the EU add up to 2.1 billion EUR each year, greatly outweighing the associated annual costs of 0.5 billion EUR.
- Exposure to PFAS, the forever chemicals, [is estimated to cost the EU 52-84 billion EUR annually](#), while the

health costs of endocrine disrupting chemicals, chemicals that impact the body's hormone system, [have been estimated at 163 billion EUR per year](#). This health economic burden hampers any attempt of the EU to strengthen competitiveness and sustainability.

We are not alone in our call for a health protective approach to EU chemicals regulations – it is also reflected in Europeans' concerns. According to a recent Eurobarometer [survey](#), more than four in five Europeans (84%) agree that EU legislation is necessary to protect the environment in their country and worry about the impact of harmful chemicals present in everyday products on their health and environment.

Our asks are also reflected in HEAL's [Prescription for the EU policy cycle 2024-2029](#), which was issued ahead of the EU elections. HEAL has shared this Prescription also with EU Commission President Ursula von der Leyen, calling on her and the future college of Commissioners to deliver on the urgent need to act on pollution and protect people's health. We look forward to hearing how we can support your efforts and answering any questions you may have on how the EU can protect health through a healthy environment and ambitious policies.

Yours sincerely,



Genon K. Jensen
Executive Director
Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL)

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) is the leading not-for-profit organisation addressing how the environment affects human health in the European Union (EU) and beyond. HEAL works to shape laws and policies that promote planetary and human health and protect those most affected by pollution, and raise awareness on the benefits of environmental action for health. HEAL's over 80 member organisations include international, European, national and local groups of health professionals, not-for-profit health insurers, patients, citizens, women, youth, and environmental experts representing over 200 million people across the 53 countries of the WHO European Region. As an alliance, HEAL brings independent and expert evidence from the health community to EU and global decision-making processes to inspire disease prevention and to promote a toxic-free, low-carbon, fair and healthy future. HEAL's EU Transparency Register Number: 00723343929-96