Delegation of the European Union

Permanent Mission of Spain

Statement on behalf of the European Union

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THEMATIC DISCUSSION: WASTE MANAGEMENT

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- CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY –

Mr/Mrs Chairperson,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union and its 27 Member States.

Economies depend on natural resources for their prosperity. However, the natural environment on which we depend is facing increasing pressure. Managing resources, including waste, in an unsustainable way also means negative impacts on health, livelihoods and on the environment. We have, therefore, to move towards a resource efficient economy – one that will grow – but in a sustainable way.

The five Regional Implementation Meetings that were held last fall and the recent Secretary-General Report on waste management have shown that challenges remain serious because of, among others, the rapid increase of waste generation due to population and economic growth, urbanization rates, industrial activities, wastewater generation levels or the emergence of various waste streams (such as WEEE/E-waste). Given their various nature - regulatory, institutional, technical, financial, social and behavioural - these challenges are all the more difficult to overcome. Lack of education and training, information, collected data, traceability as well as monitoring systems are also part of the problem. In this particular context, global solutions are therefore particularly needed.

Along with international instruments such as the Basel and Stockholm Conventions and the Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM), it is important to recall that the European Union has addressed these issues in its overarching Sustainable Development Strategy and in several policies, such as the Strategy on Natural Resources, the Strategy on Waste Prevention and Recycling, the Raw Materials Initiative, the Action Plan on Sustainable Consumption and Production, and pieces of legislation such as the Waste Framework Directive, Directives on End-of-life Vehicles (ELV), Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE) and Packaging and Packaging Waste.

Their aim is to deliver the best overall environmental outcome in laying down targets as well as key concepts such as waste hierarchy and life-cycle thinking, which shall apply as a priority order in waste management policy and legislation, i.e. prevention, preparing for re-use, recycling, recovery, disposal. Waste and recycling legislation also lay an important basis for recycling and waste management industries are a significant contribution to economic growth and job opportunities.

In the context of this CSD cycle, the EU considers that four issues are key to achieving sustainable development in waste management :

First, it is important to achieve "decoupling of environmental degradation and resource consumption from economic growth, by promoting the waste hierarchy".

The EU is of the view that:

"The best waste is the one that has not been produced": Prevention, in particular pollutants prevention - both qualitative and quantitative -, is a key factor in any waste management strategy and should target any type of waste (hazardous, non-hazardous, radioactive). More research is thus needed on new technologies and on traditional practices able to reduce waste production. A prevention strategy should be based on the polluter pays principle, include extended producer responsibility and product information availability, and act upstream on the consumption pattern and the eco-conception of the product. Prevention also includes reducing the presence of

hazardous substances in products in order to diminish the environmental impact of waste treatment ; The RoHS directive and the REACH regulation are examples of initiatives preventing hazardous waste by regulating the use of certain substances ;

"Waste which can't be prevented should be separated and used to the greatest extent possible through preparation for reuse and recycling": Reuse and recycling (e.g. of bio-waste) contribute to resource preservation, and when done properly to sustainable growth, and have a lower environmental impact than incineration and landfill ;

When it comes to technologies converting waste to energy, "some wastes are very suitable for energy recovery when further recycling is not possible" under certain conditions;

Finally, "disposal should be restricted as much as possible to waste that can not be used in a recovery process" : Banning landfilling of certain types of waste is therefore useful as well as targets for reducing quantities of biodegradable waste in landfills in order to reduce waste-related greenhouse gas emissions.

Our second priority is **how to ensure the safe and environmentally sound management of waste on a high technical standard.**

The EU considers that:

Implementing environmentally sound waste management policies also means achieving sanitation and all health related targets in the context of the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) ; all waste treatment, including reuse and recycling, can have adverse effect on human health and the environment if not applied properly. Appropriate legislation and Best Available Techniques (BAT) to reduce the polluting emissions of waste treatments are therefore particularly helpful. Information availability on the occurrence of chemicals in products and their properties is also of major importance;

The transfer and dissemination, on mutually agreed terms, of appropriate technologies for sound waste management for rural and urban areas in developing countries and countries with economies in transition is of major importance, for example through the Bali Strategic Plan for Technology Support and Capacity Building and the 3R Initiative; Ways should be found in order to integrate informal waste collection and recycling into formal, better regulated systems.

Effective governance systems are needed in order to ensure the provision of infrastructures and services in an efficient and equitable manner and involve, among others, the delegation of special responsibilities and financial resources to local authorities and the implication of other identified actors involved in the supply chain ; As regards cities, greater use should be made of integrated urban development policy approaches when it comes to modernizing infrastructure networks and improving energy efficiency ;

The development of policy instruments encouraging waste prevention and minimisation based on polluter pays principle or extended producer responsibility should in this respect be fostered and innovative financing instruments involving the private sector in infrastructure projects be further explored ;

The effective enforcement of international environmental agreements and the implementation of legislation along with public access to information, public participation in decision-making processes and access to justice in the field of environment are overarching governance principles and should remain a priority in order to change perceptions of waste in civil society ;

More attention is needed towards specific waste streams and activities, such as electric and electronic waste, obsolete chemicals stockpiles (pesticides and biocides) as well as towards emerging issues, such as waste generated by food production chains or marine litter ;

Emphasis should be laid on safe and environmentally sound ship recycling, as in the 2009 Hong Kong International Convention for the Safe and Environmentally Sound Recycling of Ships;

As regards radioactive waste, it is necessary to improve measures and international agreements regarding safety, as well as to have in place effective allocation of responsibilities for the management and effective mechanisms to ensure appropriate funding. All categories of radioactive waste should be covered;

More generally, the safety issue still remains crucial for both workers and the public as far as hazardous and radioactive wastes are concerned.

The third EU priority is to **continue to combat against illegal shipments of waste.**

The EU believes that:

Transboundary movements of waste should take place in accordance with the requirements of the Basel Convention, including the Ban Amendment;

Targeted enforcement actions are needed in order to improve detection of illegal shipments of waste both at the national and international levels ; international examples range from the IMPEL-TFS Network actions to the World Customs organisation Operation Demeter. Close cooperation between relevant authorities, inter alia environmental inspectorate and customs authorities, is crucial ;

Further harmonization should be achieved with regard to the distinction between waste and non-waste in order to clarify which regulations should apply.

Finally, the fourth priority is how to **improve the overall environmental performance of products throughout their life-cycle and continue to address unsustainable patterns of consumption and production:**

This is one of our key objectives to move towards an energy and resource efficient economy;

Boosting the demand for better products and production technologies and stimulating the diffusion of lower life-cycle impact products should be a priority as well as helping consumers in making informed choices, both when buying a product and when disposing of waste. Targeted initiatives towards specific consumer groups – women, children and youth - are of major importance when it comes to cultural and behavioural change of individuals and communities ;

When it comes to improving life-cycle approach of products at international level, and taking into account the fact that waste and (hazardous) chemicals are regulated through different instruments, the EU welcomes the outcomes of the extraordinary Conferences of the Parties of the Basel, Rotterdam and Stockholm conventions on the "synergies" process, which should be extended to the envisaged legally binding instrument on mercury. The significance of SAICM´s work on the management of chemicals throughout their life-cycle should be particularly highlighted.

Thank you for your attention