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Mr Jeremy Wates
Secretary General
European Environmental Bureau
Boulevard de Waterloo 34
1000 Brussels

Dear Mr Wates,

Thank you for your letter of 20 May 2015, urging the European Commission to restart with inclusion of substance of very high concern (SVHC) in the list of substances subject to the authorisation requirement under Title VII of Regulation (EC) No 1907/2006 ("REACH") and transparently communicate when it will restart a full implementation of the authorisation process.

You would no doubt agree that authorisation in REACH is a new process and all actors concerned are gaining experience with how it is deploying into its full operation. It has been generally recognised that it is a learning-by-doing exercise for all. To build further understanding, confidence and trust in the authorisation application system, the Commission, with the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA), Member States and with a whole range of other stakeholders, including the NGO community, has engaged since 2014 into a general discussion on a way forward for a more workable authorisation process, whilst maintaining the goals and objectives. We highly appreciate your participation and input to these discussions. The debate has taken place in several meetings of the Competent Authorities throughout the year 2014 and it still continues.

In July 2014, the Commission had therefore communicated through its regular meetings with the actors involved that it will not include any further substances into Annex XIV in 2014 in order to focus the efforts at improving the workability of applications for authorisation. As you rightly point out in your letter, the Conference on "Lessons learnt from Applications for authorisation" organised in February 2015 confirmed that the application step of authorisation is working well but fine-tuning is needed to make it work better. We appreciate that the representatives of your and other NGOs have participated in that Conference and are concurring with this outcome.

By now the work has significantly advanced and, for the first areas identified as a priority for simplification and streamlining, a public consultation has already taken place. As we have made significant progress now, the Commission will resume the preparatory work to start again adding SVHCs to the authorisation list (Annex XIV of REACH) once ECHA will have submitted the forthcoming 6th Recommendation of ECHA on priority substances, which is expected during the summer. The Commission will then consider the substances contained in both the 5th and 6th Recommendations and an initial discussion with the Member States could take place in the REACH Committee in October.

Yours sincerely,

Karmenu Vella



Elżbieta Bieńkowska

