



Business and NGO join hands to promote safer chemicals (2008-11-04)

The Business-NGO Working Group for Safer Chemicals and Sustainable Materials had its public launch after two years of behind-the-scenes planning. Spearheaded by the nonprofit environmental organization Clean Production Action, the group consists of business and NGO leaders who are creating a roadmap to the widespread use of safer chemicals in consumer products, according to the organization.

As a first step the Working Group will release a joint statement entitled "Guiding Principles for Chemicals Policy," which outlines a path for businesses to implement greener and safer chemicals. This came in response to the increasing demand from consumers, investors and governments for chemicals that have low to no toxicity and degrade into innocuous substances in the environment. Leading businesses are seeking to capture these emerging market opportunities by redesigning their products and catalyzing change in their supply chains.

Other participants in the Business-NGO Working Group include: Corporate Express, Kaiser Permanente, Hospira, Construction Specialties, True Textiles, and Catholic Healthcare West; along with NGOs such as Health Care Without Harm, Healthy Building Network, Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, Institute for Local Self-Reliance and ChemSec.

Twenty two organizations from the environmental community and the electronics, health care, building and retail sectors launched the Working Group in October 2006 in Boston. The Working Group's mission is: To promote the creation and adoption of safer chemicals and sustainable materials in a way that supports market transitions to a healthy economy, healthy environment, and healthy people.

The group's objectives include:

- Modeling a new type and degree of collaboration between NGOs and businesses working together to accelerate the transition to a safer, healthy economy.
- Crafting a "transition agenda" for moving away from petro-based materials to sustainable biobased/bioderived materials.
- Developing tools and continuous improvement criteria for moving to safer chemicals and sustainable materials.
- Advancing policy initiatives that accelerate the development and use of safer chemicals and sustainable materials.
- Transforming markets to safer chemicals and sustainable markets by, for example, aligning purchasing criteria across sectors.