



CPME/AD/Brd/030905/100/EN

At its Board meeting, Brussels, 3 September 2005, the CPME adopted the following policy: Health and Environment (REACH) (CPME 2005/100 EN/FR)

Health and Environment

It has now been scientifically demonstrated that there is indeed a link between chemical products and the appearance of diseases, such as cancers, infertility, degenerative diseases of the central nervous system and allergies

Doctors believe that the deterioration in the health situation worldwide affects both developing countries and rich countries.

Doctors believe that the chronic diseases registered by the WHO, in particular cancer, have risen alarmingly; that cancer rates have increased steadily among the populations of the industrialised countries since 1950; that cancer affects all age ranges; and that chemical pollution could contribute to the onset of cancer.

Doctors have stated that the current proliferation of a number of diseases is a consequence of environmental degradation and that chemical pollution poses a serious threat to children and to the human race.

In order to inform patients and populations of the increasing threats, doctors are calling on all national bodies to involve the medical profession in the processes of the prevention and treatment of diseases that, following scientific and impartial analysis of research into the causal links, are deemed to have been caused by factors of environmental origin, and in the process of informing the public about those diseases.

The medical profession adds its voice to the UNESCO 'Paris Appeal' of 7 May 2004, which highlighted the dangers of environmental degradation and its effects on health.

The substitution principle should be mandatory in respect of all highly suspicious chemicals. Furthermore, the precautionary principle or the vigilance and safety principle should guide the action taken by European health professionals. Establishing links between environmental indicators and health indicators is one of the major problems facing the field of environmental health.

Doctors are well aware that credible prevention of environmental health risks calls for technical measures in the environmental field and risk assessment, together with more political measures such as making decision-making processes more transparent and holding public debates on risk rating.

Accordingly, improved knowledge and more effective risk assessment are also called for in order to create conditions that are conducive to environmental health research. Efforts should be made to attract more researchers and to develop a mentality among all health professionals and in particular doctors that is geared towards environmental health risk-prevention. A culture of this nature would pave the way for an environmental health monitoring system intended to enhance knowledge of the sources of pollution and of the populations most at risk.

Relevant health indicators based on validated criteria should be developed. This would enable prevention at national level, along with preventive and therapeutic studies.

Links should also be established between environmental health and health at work. It is also desirable that the normative approach of enacting of standards relating purely to the quality of workplaces should go hand in hand with complementary research into the sources of pollution, with the aim of reducing pollution at source.

Educational programmes should also be introduced, taking account of the target audience and the extent and nature of their exposure to chemicals.