

COUNCIL OF THE EUROPEAN COMMUNITIES
GENERAL SECRETARIAT

PRESS RELEASE

11161/84 (Presse 206)

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972nd meeting of the Council

- Environment -

Brussels, 6/7 December 1984

President: Mr Liam KAVANAGH
Minister for the Environment
of Ireland

The Governments of the Member States and the Commission of the European Communities were represented as follows:

Belgium:

Mr Firmin AERTS
State Secretary for Public
Health and the Environment

Germany:

Mr Friedrich ZIMMERMANN
Federal Minister for the
Interior

Mr Carl-Dieter SPRANGER
State Secretary,
Federal Ministry of the Interior

France:

Mrs Huguette BOUCHARDEAU
Minister for the Environment

Italy:

Mr Alfredo BIONDI
Minister for Ecology

Mr Bruno ORSINI
State Secretary,
Ministry of Industry

Netherlands:

Mr P. WINSEMIUS
Minister for Housing, Regional
Planning and the Environment

Denmark:

Mr Christian CHRISTENSEN
Minister for the Environment
and for Nordic Affairs

Mr Mogens BUNDGAARD-NIELSEN
State Secretary,
Ministry of the Environment

Greece:

Mr Evangelos KOULOUMBIS
Minister for the Environment

Ireland:

Mr Liam KAVANAGH
Minister for the Environment

Mr Fergus O'BRIEN
Minister of State,
Department of the Environment

Luxembourg:

Mr Robert KRIEPS
Minister for the Environment

United Kingdom:

Mr William WALDEGRAVE
Parliamentary Under-Secretary
of State
Department of the Environment

Mr John BUTCHER
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of
State,
Department of Trade and Industry

Commission:

Viscount Etienne DAVIGNON
Vice President
Mr Karl-Heinz NARJES
Member

LEAD IN PETROL

While awaiting the Opinion of the European Parliament, the Council reached a common position on the proposed Directive on the harmonization of the laws of the Member States on the lead content of petrol.

This Directive, of great importance for the protection and improvement of public health and the environment, provides for the obligatory introduction of unleaded petrol as from October 1989, this corresponding with the delays necessary for the petroleum and automobile industries to effect the necessary investments.

The Directive does not preclude measures to be taken for the introduction of unleaded petrol from an earlier date.

The Directive also provides for Member States to reduce, as a parallel operation, the lead content of leaded petrol from 0.4 g/l to 0.15 g/l as soon as they consider it appropriate.

AIR POLLUTION BY GASES FROM ENGINES OF MOTOR VEHICLES

The Council discussed the proposal for a Directive on the harmonization of measures to be taken against air pollution by gases from engines of motor vehicles.

All the delegations were very concerned by environment problems, and acknowledged the need to pursue an energetic policy in this area; in particular they considered it necessary to tackle urgently the threats to the European environment.

Secondly all the delegations were keen to adopt a Community solution as regards pollutant emissions from motor vehicles.

The Council invited the relevant Working Party to further examine this proposal according to a specific mandate. The Working Party will report before the end of January 1985 in order to allow a decision at the next meeting of the Council, and thereby to meet the timetable set by the European Council.

AIR QUALITY STANDARDS FOR NITROGEN DIOXIDE

The Council confirmed the agreement reached at its meeting on 28/29 June 1984 ⁽¹⁾ on the proposal for a Directive laying down air-quality standards for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂). The Council will formally adopt this Directive after legal and linguistic revision of the texts.

⁽¹⁾ Cf. Press Release 8129/84 (Presse 114) p. 5 of 27.6.1984

INFORMATION SYSTEM ON THE STATE OF THE ENVIRONMENT AND THE
NATURAL RESOURCES IN THE COMMUNITY

The Council agreed on the adoption of a work programme of the Commission concerning an experimental project for gathering, co-ordinating and rendering consistent information on the state of the environment and natural resources in the Community for a period of four years starting on 1 January 1985.

The programme will provide results which will be of direct utility for implementing Community environment policy and make it possible to judge the advisability of proceeding to subsequent stages of the establishment of an information system on the state of the environment in the Community.

Priority application to problems of Community scale will be given to:

- Biotopes of major importance for nature conservation
- Acid deposition
- Protection of the Mediterranean environment.

TITANIUM DIOXIDE

The Council took up its discussion of the proposed Directive on procedures for harmonizing the programmes for the reduction and eventual elimination of pollution caused by waste from the titanium dioxide industry.

The Council concentrated its discussion on the major outstanding items and in particular the question of the inclusion of environmental quality objectives ; the Council was unable however, to reach an agreement on this question, and accordingly referred the proposal back to the Permanent Representatives Committee for further preparatory work to be done at a technical level.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

The Council took up its discussion of the proposal for a Directive on the assessment of the environmental effects of certain public and private projects. The Danish delegation declared that its review of national policy on areas covered by the proposal was still continuing in Denmark, and that it would be unable to take a position before some months. The Council consequently invited the Permanent Representatives Committee to take up this matter with a view to deciding upon the most appropriate means of achieving unanimity on the proposal.

AIR POLLUTION FROM LARGE COMBUSTION PLANTS

The Council held a further discussion on the proposal for a Directive on the limitation of the emissions of pollutants into the air from large combustion plants. The Council's debate showed that there still exist differences of opinion concerning the main issues : global emission reductions ; emission limit values ; the scope of the Directive. Certain ideas for advancing work on this matter were put forward. The Permanent Representatives Committee was invited to continue its work in the light of the remarks made during this meeting, and on the basis of the revised proposal that the Commission intends to make following the Opinion of the European Parliament.

CONTAINERS OF LIQUIDS FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION

The Council examined outstanding problems arising on the proposal for a Directive on containers of liquids for human consumption. The Council was unable to take the final steps towards agreement on this matter and referred the proposal to the Permanent Representatives Committee for further preparatory work.

ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTER IN BHOPAL (INDIA)

1. The Council of the European Communities meeting today in Brussels discussed the recent tragic industrial accident which occurred in Bhopal, India, where apparently over 2000 persons had lost their lives and many others were seriously injured. Events in Bhopal surpassed all previous occurrences of this kind in their scope and scale and in the severity of the impact they have had on local populations and the environment. The Council expressed its sense of shock and conveyed its deepest sympathy to the Government of India and above all to the people affected. It affirmed the Community's readiness to consider specific requests for assistance which the Government of India might make.

2. The Council stressed its view that it was most urgent to seek solutions to the problems posed by dangerous chemicals for health and the environment wherever they arise. In its Resolution of 3 October 1984 (84/C 272/01), the Council had requested the Commission "to examine the possibilities for achieving closer convergence of Community efforts to integrate the environmental dimension in development aid and to submit any appropriate proposals to the Council as soon as possible". When it met on 6 November, the Council reiterated the need for action in this field.

In the context of these Resolutions, the Council today reaffirmed that, where dangerous substances are involved, the Community and the Member States should continue to seek ways to promote the integration of the best techniques of prevention and protection and the best manufacturing processes in projects in which they or their industrial enterprises are involved.

3. As far as dangerous industrial activities within the Community are concerned, the Council had adopted in 1982 a Directive (82/501/EEC) which provided that Member States should take a series of measures intended to achieve greater security both for the workers involved and for the environment, including the general public. This Directive, which covers the processes and substances (including methyl isocyanate) apparently involved in the Bhopal accident, came into force on 8 January 1984.

MISCELLANEOUS DECISIONS

Further Decision on Environment

The Council adopted, in the official languages of the Communities, the Directive on the supervision and control within the European Community of the trans-frontier shipment of hazardous waste. (Cf. Press Release 8129/84 (Presse 114) of 28/29.6.84, p. 3).

Law of the Sea

The Council decided to authorize the signature by the Community of the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea.

It is recalled that the final date for the signing of this Convention, which began on 10 December 1982, is the 9 December next. The Convention allows the Community, as an international organization, to sign in its own right if a majority of Member States are signatories themselves. Five Member States have already signed in December 1982 and three others have already declared their intention to sign.

The Community's signature will be accompanied by two declarations, one concerning the competence of the Community in the fields covered by the Convention, and the other, of a political nature, giving a general evaluation of the Convention.

Appointments

On the proposal of the German Government, the Council appointed Mr U. BOEGE member of the Advisory Committee of the Euratom Supply Agency, to replace Mr G. SIEPMANN for the remainder of the latter's term of office, namely until 28 March 1985.

On the proposal of the French Government, the Council also appointed Mr P. FRIGOLA member of the Advisory Committee of the Euratom Supply Agency to replace Mr A. BALLAGNY for the remainder of the latter's term of office, i.e. until 28 March 1985.

Finally, on the proposal of the Danish Government, the Council appointed Mr Jens Kristian GØTRIK alternate member of the Advisory Committee on Medical Training, to replace Mr Arne Scheel THOMSEN for the remainder of the latter's term of office, which runs until 8 November 1985.

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Bruxelles, le 5 decembre 1984
Note BIO (84) 467 aux Bureaux Nationaux
cc. aux Membres du Groupe du Porte-Parole

PREPARATION CONSEIL ENVIRONNEMENT
6 decembre 1984

(O. von SCHWERIN)

L'ordre du jour est tres charge.

A. Au CENTRE DES DISCUSSIONS seront les problemes de la pollution de l'air, evoques expressemment par les chefs d'Etat a Dublin qui seront traites sous trois points:

1. PLOMB DANS L'ESSENCE: un compromis parait possible sur base des propositions de la Commission de mai 84 (voir P-40)

2. EMISSIONS DES VOITURES: probleme plus controversé (voir P 40 et P 46). Un accord definitif impossible tant que le PE n'a pas rendu son avis. Possibilite d'une orientation politique qui distingue notamment entre grandes voitures d'une part et petites et moyennes d'autre part.

3. EMISSIONS DES GRANDES INSTALLATIONS DE COMBUSTION: La proposition de la Commission de decembre 83 vise une reduction substantielle (60 % pour l'anhydride sulfureux, 40 % pour l'oxydes d'azote) de ces emissions d'ici 1995, ce qui est considere comme très ambitieux et trop couteux par certaines delegations, notamment RU, GR, IRL.

B. Paraissent nar contre MURES POUR ADOPTION:

4. Directive sur les dechets toxiques (dir. dite SEVESO apres scandale dioxine), acquise en substance, adoption "point A".

5. Dioxyde d'azote (normes de qualite de l'air): adoption possible apres avis du PE.

6. Directive sur le recyclage et reutilisation de bouteilles a consommation humaine.

C. Point qui RESTERONT BLOQUES:

7. Directive sur les incidences sur l'environnement des grands ouvrages industriels, une proposition que est devant le Conseil depuis plus de 4 ans et qui se heurte toujours a une reserve de fond danoise.

8. Directive sur le dioxyde de titane: opposition anglaise qui insiste sur insertion des normes de qualite.

a suivre
Amities

N.G. van der Pas, Comeur 16h00////


Bruxelles, le 7 decembre 1984

Note BIO (84) 467(suite 1) aux Bureaux Nationaux
cc. aux Membres du Groupe du Porte-Parole

CONSEIL ENVIRONNEMENT (O.von SCHWERIN)

Le CONSEIL ENVIRONNEMENT s'est termine vers 4 heures et demi ce matin. Malgre les 16 heures de negociations sans interruption il n'a pu aboutir formellement que sur quelques points qui etaient deja largement acquis en substance anterieurement (voir BIO preparation du 5 decembre).

1. Seul la discussion sur le PLOMB DANS L'ESSENCE a abouti a des progres significatifs: le Conseil a effectivement arrete une position commune sur les points essentiels de cette directive, qui correspond largement aux propositions de la Commission, a savoir:

- introduction obligatoire de l'essence sans plomb a partir de 1989;
- possibilite d'anticipation laissee a la discretion des Etats Membres;
- reduction du contenu maximum de plomb dans l'essence de 0,40 g/l a 0,15 g/l. Neanmoins le delai de cette derniere mesure est laissee a la demande de la delegation francaise et a la discretion des Etats Membres.

A rappeler que cette directive qui constitue un des elements-clefs de la lutte contre la pollution atmospherique notamment par les pluies acides n'a pas pu etre formellement adopte etant donne que le Parlement Europeen n'a pas encore rendu son avis.

2. A rappeler de plus la signification de cette directive pour le probleme essentiel de la REDUCTION DES EMISSIONS AUTOMOBILES avec lequel le lien a ete souligne par plusieurs delegations. La discussion sur ce deuxieme volet a absorbe la plus grande partie de la nuit sans conduire a des resultats significatifs. En effet, les positions des Etats Membres - d'ailleurs bien connues par la discussion publique- qui favorisent des progres substantiels et urgents (not. RFA, NL, DK) d'une part et d'autres delegations qui craignent des charges trop onereuses pour leur industrie automobile d'autre part (not. FR, IT, RU) se sont revelees aussi eloignees qu'il etait a peine possible de formuler un texte commun qui etablit un programme pour les travaux futurs dans ce domaine.

Le seul nouvel element etait le fait qu'un compromis pourrait etre trouve non seulement par un rapprochement des dates prevues pour atteindre le niveau d'emissions equivalent aux valeurs americaine/japonaise, mais aussi dans la differenciation selon la puissance des voitures (application de ces valeurs aux voitures de plus de 2000 ccm a partir de 1988/89).

Le Conseil a decide apres des discussions tres controversees de charger un groupe de fonctionnaires a haut niveau de rapporter d'ici la fin janvier 85 les problemes sous cette hypothese (definition des criteres pour cette differenciation, question d'une differenciation entre voitures moyennes et petites, delais pour l'application des normes e. a.).

A suivre,
Amities,

M. SANTARELLI, Comeur, 15h30////

Bruxelles,
le 7 decembre 1984
Note BIO (84) 467 (suite 2 et fin) aux Bureaux Nationaux
cc. aux Membres du Groupe du Porte-Parole

CONSEIL ENVIRONNEMENT (O. von SCHWERIN)

3. EMISSIONS DES GRANDES INSTALLATIONS DE COMBUSTION:
ce troisieme volet, important dans la lutte contre la pollution de l'air n'a pas fait des progres substantiels, les divergences entre les Etats Membres sur la reduction des emissions (40 % voir 60 % jusqu'en 1995) d'une part, et le seuil d'application (50 MW) d'autre part, ayant persiste. Plusieurs delegations ont souligne les charges financieres importantes (evaluees par la delegation britannique a 2 Mrd de livres Sterling) que l'application de cette directive aux installations existantes entraineraient; a noter d'autre part la prise de position assez favorable de la delegation francaise. Ce point est renvoye au COREPER.

4. Dechets toxiques et dangereux (directive reglant le trafic transfrontalier, d'actualite accrue apres le scandale des 41 futs de SEVESO): adoption en "point A", voir en particulier (note IP (84) 434).

5. DIOXYDE D'AZOTE (normes de qualite de l'air): mure deja depuis le dernier Conseil, la directive a ete adoptee.

6. RECYCLAGE ET REUTILISATION DES EMBALLAGES LIQUIDES: bien que mure, cette directive n'a pas ete adopte, la delegation britannique ayant insiste sur une recommandation au lieu d'une directive.

7. INCIDENCES SUR L'ENVIRONNEMENT: la directive d'importance fondamentale pour l'instauration de l'approche preventive dans la protection de l'environnement s'est de nouveau heurtee a la reserve de fond danoise; neanmoins une certaine perspective s'est dessinee en vue d'une adoption lors du prochain Conseil.

8. DIOXYDE DE TITANE: pas d'adoption e.a. en raison du probleme britannique visant a l'inclusion des valeurs qualitatives. Renvoye au groupe du COREPER.

9. DROIT DE LA MER: Le Conseil a adopte (en point A) un texte (a inscrire au Procès Verbal) concernant la signature de la Convention des Nations-Unies sur le droit de la mer par la Communauté; les delegations britanniques et allemandes qui ont decide de ne pas signer la Convention sur le plan national se sont abstenus de cette decision.

10. Enfin, le Conseil a adopte une declaration concernant l'accident de BHOPAL, Inde, qui est considere deja comme la catastrophe industrielle la plus serieuse qui s'est jamais produite quant aux repercussions sur l'homme et l'environnement. Le texte de cette declaration vous parviendra par telecopieur.

11. Quant a l'idee de tenir une deuxieme reunion du Conseil avant la fin de l'annee pour resoudre le probleme de la pollution par emissions des automobiles, elle a ete abandonnee en raison des progres limites dans ce domaine qui ne permettent plus de compter sur une resolution de ces problemes dans un laps de temps aussi court. La prochaine reunion du CONSEIL ENVIRONNEMENT est donc prevue pour le debut mars 1985.

Amities,
M. SANTARELLI, Comeur 17h00////



