

Obsolete pesticides
Mini Hearing - 29 June 2010 - European Parliament ASP 3 E 2

First of all I would like to mention that this meeting is a joint initiative of myself, my colleague Esther de Lange and John Vijgen who is working for the International HCH & Pesticides Association (IHPA). Almost a year ago John Vijgen informed me that the situation on obsolete pesticides in Ukraine, Moldova and Armenia is very concerning. In even more countries the situation is critical and is doing great damage to environment and people. Therefore we initiated this meeting in cooperation with Esther de Lange, who is a member of the environment committee in the parliament. We want to raise attention, get obsolete pesticides on the European agenda and aim at a permanent international cooperation instrument.

I'm delighted to see that so many experts and different nationalities are present today. When we started to organise this meeting it was clear that many people, organisations and countries are working (with passion) on this subject. Immediately we received enthusiastic and inspiring messages, it shows that there is great interest in a meeting like this on EU level. Present today are the organisations like FAO, OSCE, NATO and Worldbank, and countries like Ukraine, Moldova, Russia, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, Armenia, Uzbekistan, Japan, Norway, Germany and Albania. This is more than we could expect.

As a member of the European Parliament for more than 20 years I recall numerous meetings on obsolete pesticides. In the western part of our continent we have achieved a great deal, thanks to good cooperation between producers and users of pesticides and an active role of governments and the European institutions. However, in many countries there is still a reason for great concern. And there is still great need for more coordination and cooperation. Especially funding and the exchange of knowledge and "best practises" are essential. I see this meeting as a good opportunity to make a start of a better cooperation between organisations and countries.

After the enlargement of the European Union, the European Parliament has continued, and even reinforced its commitment to the elimination of obsolete pesticides in member states as well as neighbouring countries. Since EU member states are effectively dealing with polluted sites in their own countries, there is a big responsibility for the EU to their neighbours. This is possible by funding, assistance in cleaning up sites, delivering knowledge or by coordination. This is where the Commission to my opinion can play an important role. The Commission should make an inventory where the problems are, what different players can offer and how with joint forces damage can be reduced or even prevented. Within the European commission DG RELEX is dealing with obsolete pesticide because it's dealing with this problem outside the EU. But more influence and participation of DG ENVI is wishful because it is an environmental problem. Therefore I'm pleased to see that the Commission is represented today by DG ENVI. It's encouraging that the two DG's are working more and more together on this subject.

I do think that this meeting can play an important role in the debate on fighting obsolete pesticides. I hope the presentations of today's meeting will show the present problems and you, the participants, will together with the panel formulate clear points of action. Let's get rid of those stockpiles, let's take this meeting as a new starting point.

Thank you very much for your attention.