



**COUNCIL OF
THE EUROPEAN UNION**

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations
Subject: Need for an EU action plan for highly fluorinated substances (PFASs)
- Information from the Swedish delegation

Delegations find in Annex an information note from the Swedish delegation on the above-mentioned subject, which will be dealt with under "other business" at the Council (Environment) meeting on 12 June 2014.

Need for an EU action plan for highly fluorinated substances (PFASs)

- Information from the Swedish delegation -

The Swedish government is concerned about the widespread use of highly fluorinated chemicals, called PFASs (poly- and perfluorinated alkylated substances) in certain products. We would therefore like to draw Member States' attention to the potential environmental and health risks linked to the use of PFASs and the need for an EU action plan which includes an overall risk assessment and measures needed for the whole group of substances.

PFASs include hundreds of chemicals and have become widespread in our society through their use in a large number of consumer products (e.g. textiles, kitchenware, shoes, floor wax and fire extinguishing agents). All perfluorinated substances are extremely persistent in the environment and some are bioaccumulative and toxic. The highly fluorinated chemical PFOS is banned and a proposal to restrict the use of PFOA is being prepared under the EU's chemical regulation REACH. A number of PFASs have been identified as substances of very high concern and have thus been added to the candidate list. Other highly fluorinated and persistent substances have been introduced as substitutes, and some of these have now been detected in both the environment and in human blood. Our basic knowledge of the potentially hazardous properties of most of these substances is limited. There is a potential risk of serious long-term problems if these persistent and widespread substances prove to have hazardous properties.

Recent findings of contaminated drinking water supplies in Sweden add to these concerns. High levels of PFASs have been detected, both in ground water and in drinking water, in different parts of Sweden. Fire protection exercise sites (including public and military airports) were found to be the source of this pollution, which resulted in the closure of drinking water supplies. This kind of contamination is probably not unique to Sweden and could be a potential problem in other Member States.

These concerns and findings highlight the need to assess the whole group of substances and take appropriate measures. Sweden therefore believes that the EU needs, as a matter of priority, to look into the potential risks related to the use of all highly fluorinated substances. We look for your support in calling on the Commission to develop an action plan for highly fluorinated substances.
