



**Event on window blinds – 02 /12/2010**

**Statement from Mr Stefano SORO-**

**Head of Unit – Product and Service Safety**

- We all know the saying "Home sweet home", but would you also confidently say "Home safe home"? In Europe every year domestic accidents claim more victims than road or work accidents, and children below 5 years old are particularly vulnerable to them.
- Many accidents are due **to risks parents and caregivers are unaware of. Take the example of cords and chain in window blinds and coverings.** They pose a strangulation risk to children, especially very young ones. Children as young as 1 or 2 years old can get caught in the loop of the cords or entangle in hanging cords while playing or exploring. As a result they strangle, because they are unable to disentangle themselves.
- **This short film made by our colleagues of the US CPSC shows very clearly these hazards. (projection of short film duration 01:46 minutes)**
- Statistics are frightening, as indicated in the background package you have received. Since the beginning of this year, DG SANCO has received information of 6 fatal accidents in UK, Ireland, and Finland involving children aged between 1 and 3 years.
- These tragedies can be prevented. We all have to work towards prevention. As for many other risks, there isn't one single strategy but an array of different approaches. Today I want to illustrate what is being done to address this risk.
  - There is **intensive international cooperation** with US, CANADA and Australia. We are exchanging information in a concerted effort to come to the best solutions for our consumers. My colleagues from these three countries are here today and will speak about this.
  - We are also working closely with **standardisation experts** to reinforce existing safety standards. There is also close cooperation between standardisers in US, Canada and Europe. We will hear more about this.
  - The Commission is also working on a **draft decision to streamline the revision of the existing European standard**. This is a good example showing the role of the GPSD as ultimate safety net for consumers' protection.

- At the same time, we need also **to raise the awareness of consumers**. Whether safer standards will apply to new blinds, we still have to address the risk posed by the millions of blinds installed at home. On this, both national authorities and economic operators are working to inform consumers on how to ensure safety at home.
- We will also hear and see about **safer products**.
- **Consumer's expectations on safety are important**. We want to hear from them. This is why closing this event we have the representatives of consumers' interests in standardisation.
- I wish also to remind you that additional information such as printed material, safety devices and products, as well as videos are available in room 020 , just a couple of meters away, on this floor.