

Brussels, 21 September 2006

## **Environment: Commission pilot projects result in industry commitments to make 'greener' products**

*Two European Commission pilot projects to improve the environmental performance of everyday products have resulted in commitments by manufacturers to find new ways to reduce the environmental impacts of mobile telephones and wooden garden furniture. Under the leadership of Finland's Nokia a wide range of companies have voluntarily committed to take additional steps to cut mobile phones' energy consumption, reduce hazardous materials content, and increase consumer awareness of recycling, France's Carrefour has committed with other stakeholders reduce the environmental impact of tropical wooden garden chairs through design changes. The implementation of these commitments will be monitored by the Commission, which initiated the projects two years ago. The Commission is now calling on other industries to reduce the environmental impacts of their products in a similar fashion.*

Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas said: "Looked at globally, the production and consumption of products have a huge impact on our environment through the use of resources, energy and transport and the creation of waste. These pilot projects have successfully demonstrated how Integrated Product Policy can reduce this impact. I applaud the leadership shown by Nokia and Carrefour and warmly welcome the commitments made by the participating companies. I urge others to take similar action to green their products. "

Veli Sundbäck, Executive Vice-President, Corporate Relations and Responsibility at Nokia, commented: "Mobile communication brings benefits to societies and our environment through efficiency, but we also want our products to become increasingly green. This is a responsibility for the entire mobile sector. Nokia proposed this pilot to the Commission to bring the industry and environmental organisations together to develop new ideas and commit to action.."

Roland Vaxelaire, Carrefour's Director for Responsibility, Quality and Risk Management, said: "We were pleased to share our considerable experience of integrating environmental and social considerations into our sourcing of tropical wood garden furniture. Carrefour strongly supports the demand by more than 70 companies for legislation to ban the import of illegally-sourced timber and wood products into the European market."

### **The life cycle approach**

The pilot projects have highlighted the environmental benefits of using the so-called 'life cycle approach' that is central to Integrated Product Policy (IPP) and the Commission's new Thematic Strategies on natural resources and waste management. The life cycle approach involves taking account of the environmental impacts at each stage of a product's life - from when the raw materials and energy that go into making it are extracted from the Earth, right through to when the product and its components are recycled or disposed of at the end of their life.

## Stakeholder commitments

The participating companies have committed to making environmental improvements that are economically and socially feasible. These focus on reducing the environmental impacts of the products at the stages of their life cycle where they are greatest.

On **mobile phones**, the stakeholders<sup>1</sup> have committed to take action:

- to go beyond current regulatory standards and eliminate or reduce additional hazardous materials used in manufacturing including certain flame retardants and phthalates;
- to reduce energy consumption by equipping phones with reminders unplug chargers once the battery is recharged;
- to develop measures to improve the take-back systems for used or unwanted phones, thus increasing the numbers returned for recycling;
- to provide more environmental information and guidance to consumers to enable them to make environmentally informed decisions.

Nokia estimates that if only 10% of the world's mobile phone users unplugged their charger once their phone was fully charged, enough energy would be saved to power 60,000 European homes for a year.

Full details regarding the pilot work, actions and recommendations are at [www.ec.europa.eu/environment/ipp/mobile.htm](http://www.ec.europa.eu/environment/ipp/mobile.htm)

The project on a **tropical wooden garden chair**<sup>2</sup> has resulted in:

- confirmation that the most important environmental issue is to ensure the wood is sustainably produced, which the participating companies are already committed to;
- a commitment by producers to improve the design of the product to make its material use environmentally friendlier and make it easier to transport, thereby requiring fewer means of transport;
- a commitment to improve consumer information on the environmental characteristics of the product.

## Next steps

The Commission will assess manufacturers' progress in meeting these commitments a year from now. It also plans to develop a list of products sold on the European market which have the greatest potential for environmental improvement. This will be used to help focus environmental policy on areas where the most difference can be made (<http://ec.europa.eu/environment/ipp/identifying.htm> )

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<sup>1</sup> The mobile phone project was led by Nokia and included participants from Motorola, Panasonic, Epson, Intel, AMD, UK Department for environment, food and rural affairs (Defra), Finnish Environmental Institute, Teliasonera, France Télécom/Orange, Vodafone, Umicore, WWF, BEUC and the European Commission.

<sup>2</sup> The tropical wood garden chair project was led by Carrefour and included participants from IKEA, Pro-natura, WWF, BEUC, CEI-Bois, FSC, OVAM (Flanders public waste agency) and the European Commission.