

To:
Mr Frans Timmermans
Executive Vice-President for the European
Green Deal & Climate Action

CC:
Mr Virginijus Sinkevičius
Commissioner for Environment, Oceans and
Fisheries

Ms Stella Kyriakides
Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

Mr Thierry Breton
Commissioner for Internal Market

Mr Nicolas Schmit
Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights

**Call for an EU action plan for PFAS with the goal to minimise
environmental and human exposure to PFAS**

Please accept our sincere congratulations on your appointments as Executive Vice-President for the European Green Deal & Climate Action and as Commissioners for Environment, Oceans and Fisheries; Health and Food Safety; Internal Market; and Jobs and Social Rights respectively. We are truly looking forward to working with you in the coming years.

As Ministers for the Environment, we would like to express our serious concerns about the growing evidence of adverse effects on human health and the environment posed by exposure to highly fluorinated compounds (PFAS). These concerns are clearly expressed in paragraph 14 of the Council Conclusions of 26 June 2019 'Towards a Sustainable Chemicals Policy Strategy of the Union'.

PFASs constitute a group of thousands of man-made chemicals that are widely used in various consumer and industrial products. PFASs are released into the environment from production sites, from products and the use of mixtures such as fire-fighting foams. PFASs are a matter of great concern due to their extreme persistence, mobility in the environment and ability to bioaccumulate in living organisms. The

widespread occurrence of PFASs in the environment constitutes a threat to our drinking water supplies. Because PFASs are extremely persistent, it is imperative to minimise the further release of these substances as soon as possible, which means that action must be taken without delay.

We continue to gain knowledge of their adverse effects on human health and the environment, while EU citizens are increasingly being exposed to a mixture of PFASs with the resulting increase in associated health costs. Today, some PFASs are classified as toxic to reproduction and the liver and are suspected of being carcinogens. We also know that human health effects, such as increased risk for cancer, effects on the immune system and endocrine disruption, have been associated with exposure to certain PFASs. The large-scale contamination of soil and drinking water resources, including surface and ground water bodies in European countries, has led to significant remediation costs in an increasing number of places.

We must act swiftly and therefore urge you to develop – as a priority and early in the new legislative period – a coherent and coordinated EU action plan for PFASs. The enclosed paper describes possible central elements for an EU action plan for your consideration. The action plan should address all PFAS-related issues through regulatory and non-regulatory actions and drive the work in a coherent direction. A key message is that we cannot continue with the current inefficient substance-by-substance assessment. In order to avoid regrettable substitution, we must manage all PFASs as a group (or a limited number of sub-groups) since they constitute a large number of substances with similar properties of concern.

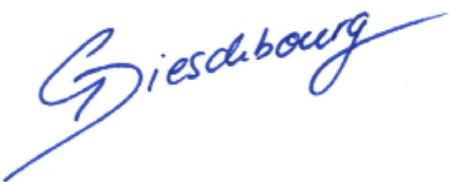
We propose that action to phase out PFASs be taken at EU-level no later than 2025 and be in effect by 2030, in line with the timeframe for the UN Global Goals for Sustainable Development.

As the June Environment Council concluded, the use of this group of substances should be limited to essential uses only (for which alternatives are not yet available). The grouping approach is central to making risk assessment and risk management simple and robust across sectors in accordance with the finding of the REFIT evaluations of chemicals legislation, and to facilitate the transition to green and sustainable chemistry in a circular economy.

We remain at your disposal to provide guidance and assistance in developing an ambitious action plan to minimise the risks associated with PFASs.



Lea Wermelin
Minister for Environment, Denmark



Carole Dieschbourg
Minister for the Environment, Climate and Sustainable Development,
Luxembourg



Ola Elvestuen
Minister of Climate and Environment, Norway



Isabella Lövin
Minister for the Environment and Climate, and Deputy Prime Minister,
Sweden