



PRESS RELEASE

European Environmental Bureau

EEB attacks Commission for refusing to take up clear signal from European Environment Agency on need for ambitious tax reform agenda

(Brussels, November 29, 2005). Today John Hontelez, Secretary General of the European Environmental Bureau (EEB), called upon the European Commission to take the lead in an ambitious environmental tax reform in the EU. He referred to the first conclusion of the "State and Outlook 2005" report of the European Environment Agency (EEA), presented in Brussels today, calling for tax reform, or "a gradual shift of the tax base away from taxing 'good resources' such as investment and labour, towards taxing 'bad resources', such as pollution and inefficient use".

Commission Vice-President Margot Wallström responded to the EEB Secretary General saying that the Commission does not think EU member states would accept such a proposal, so the Commission is not likely to try.

John Hontelez: *"The Commissioner's answer is really unacceptable. The EEA report clearly shows that environmental tax reform is highly necessary to create realistic market price signals, thereby triggering innovation with much needed environmental benefits. This Commission is about to present a new Sustainable Development Strategy. Refusing to launch a major initiative to boost environmental fiscal reforms inside the EU is refusing leadership in environmental policies. This Commission already risks going into the record books as the worst one ever for the protection of public health, biodiversity and the planet"*.

As Europe's largest federation of environmental citizens' organisations, the EEB's mission is to promote environmental and sustainable policies at European Union level. It has some 150 member organisations – based in 27 countries in the enlarged EU and beyond – which work together on biodiversity, climate change, chemicals, natural resources, waste, urban environment, noise, soil, agriculture, enlargement, ecological product policy, clean air and water, and environmental fiscal reform.

The EEA report is a five-year assessment that covers 31 countries, providing an overview of Europe's environment and pointing to challenges ahead. Key areas of concern highlighted in "The European environment: state and outlook 2005" include climate change as well as biodiversity, marine ecosystems, land and water resources, air pollution and health.

The European Commission is likely to agree on a new Sustainable Development Strategy on 13th December, following up on a strategy agreed in Gothenburg by the European Council in 2001.

Further information:

John Hontelez, EEB Secretary General, hontelez@eeb.org, Tel: +32 2 289 1091

Gemma Parkes, EEB Press & Publications Officer, gemma.parkes@eeb.org, Tel: +32 2 289 1309

EEB: www.eeb.org

EEA: www.eea.eu.int

European Environmental Bureau

Blvd de Waterloo 34, 1000 Brussels, Belgium – Tel: +32 2 289 1090 – Fax: +32 2 289 1099 – Email: eeb@eeb.org

Websites: www.eeb.org www.participate.org www.chemicalreaction.org www.zeromercury.org