



**Ms Joke Schauvliege**

President of the EU Environment Council  
Flemish Minister for Environment, Nature and  
Culture

Koolstraat 35 box 5  
1000 BRUSSEL Address

5 July 2010

Dear President,

European companies have always played and will continue to play a key role in tackling societal challenges such as environmental goals through their innovative products and solutions. As a "solution provider", business is committed to work with EU policy-makers to make Europe a resource-efficient economy. It is in the interest of business and of society as a whole.

Ahead of the **Informal Environment Council on 12-13 July 2010** where Environment Ministers will exchange views on sustainable materials management, BUSINESSEUROPE would like to pass on to you the following pivotal elements to ensure a successful materials and natural resources policy in the EU:

- *Ensuring a sound knowledge base*

A number of critical questions should be examined thoroughly in order to ensure an in-depth understanding of the nature and scale of the challenges linked to the use of materials and natural resources. For instance, the long-term consumption trends of key resources from a strategic and broad industrial needs-based point of view should be modelled according to different growth scenarios. Projections will give valuable information about the availability of resources. The "knowledge" debate should be sufficiently mature to ensure well-informed policy decisions.

- *Providing an integrated policy approach*

There are already several EU initiatives ongoing that include aspects of sustainable use of resources and resource efficiency. It demonstrates that this is not a stand-alone issue, but is interlinked with further policy areas such as the European Commission's Raw Materials Initiative. Further steps should therefore tie in with these existing initiatives and the experience gained from their application must be taken into account in order to establish an integrated approach which gives equal weight to the three inter-linked "pillars" of sustainability (economic, social and environmental). This is a precondition to ensure a successful materials and natural resources policy.

- *Avoiding artificial target-based policies*

While resource efficiency improvements are undoubtedly essential in achieving better use of our natural resources, the concept can hardly be restricted to a simple numerical target such as a universal resource productivity target or to a percentage of recycled material content. Such a strict approach could jeopardise innovation and lead to less sustainable alternatives. In any case, a debate on targets should not be launched before a consensus is reached on accurate and reliable indicators to measure resource efficiency improvements.

- *Making research and innovation the driving force for efficient use of resources*

Innovation is a crucial requirement for economic growth in the long term and for job creation in Europe. It is also a key element for addressing the major challenges facing societies today, particularly those linked to climate change and energy security, and also in the field of sustainable use of natural resources and resource efficiency.

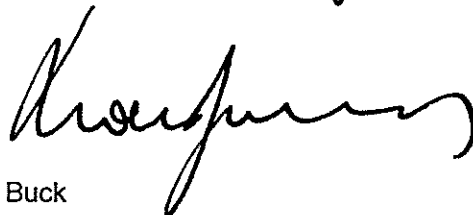
- *Boosting framework conditions for the EU recovery/secondary materials markets*

Additional efforts are still needed to ensure the establishment of a genuine "recycling society" with fair rules for all market operators. In particular, the full application of the single market rules with regard to waste for recovery and the harmonised implementation of the Waste Framework Directive and of the Waste Shipment Regulation across Europe are key success factors.

I trust that BUSINESSEUROPE's views can bring valuable contributions to your debate and remain at your disposal should you require any additional information.

Yours sincerely,

*Vriendelijke groet,*



Philippe de Buck