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EPBA
EUROPEAN
PORTABLE
BATTERY
ASSOCIATION

EPBA Key comments on the report of Mr Blokland MEP
Voting scheduled for 5th April 2004

The EPBA supports a policy of sustainable collection and recycling of spent batteries throughout the EU. The revision of the battery directive 91/157/EEC is an opportunity to ensure workable legislation, to ensure sustainable collection and recycling systems in an enlarged Europe, and to address the need for harmonization in the best interests of the EU consumer, environment and industry

Having carefully analysed the report of Mr Blokland on the Commission's proposal, the EPBA has the following comments.

1 UNJUSTIFIED AND DRASTIC MARKETING RESTRICTIONS:

- The report of Mr Blokland would result in a ban about 35% of the battery market with no scientific justification, evidence of consumer support, or mandate from a Member State government. The ban will impact batteries where no replacements are possible for the most part.
- The market proportion to be restricted is approximately 2.2 billion cells (EPBA statistics).
- Restrictive amendments tabled at Article 4 are unjustified from a scientific and consumer choice view-point. The limits set out will result in a total prohibition on all zinc based button cells used in every-day applications, including watches, cameras, essential medical equipment, such as insulin pumps and paediatric thermometers and electronic appliances such as chip cards.
- The limits as proposed by the EP would also impact zinc carbon and alkaline manganese consumer batteries. Zinc carbon batteries (commonly used in clocks, toys, torches etc) contain lead for an extended shelf life without leakage and to avoid dead cells. Lead is also used in soldering material during multi-cell assembly for safety reasons. Some alkaline manganese (larger consumer size) batteries contain lead in the zinc gel as an inhibitor to also *prevent leakage*. These batteries are commonly used in halogen flashlights, recording equipment and photo equipment. All portable lead acid batteries would also be prohibited. They are commonly used for stand-by power, including back up generators at power stations, electrical equipment and large gardening equipment.
- Finally, all portable NiCad batteries would be prohibited.

☉ IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED TO MEPS ON THE ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE THAT YOU REJECT ALL AMENDMENTS TO ARTICLE 4 AND RETAIN THE SCIENTIFICALLY JUSTIFIED COMMISSION TEXT.

2 UNACHIEVABLE COLLECTION TARGETS :

- Targets with a level of above 120 g/inhabitant/ year are unachievable, thereby rendering the Directive unworkable. Higher rates were extracted from the Bio Intelligence report requested by the Commission in the Extended Impact Assessment. This assessment covered collection systems in existence only in 5 Member States (Germany, Holland, Belgium, France and Austria), which already have a history of waste collection including existing infrastructures and a population used to sorting waste. And even then, only Belgium and Austria have reached the target of 160 g/inhabitant/ year by 2002.
- Targets as set out in certain amendments and based on percentages do not allow for measuring with accuracy, or allow for battery hoarding criteria (6 to 15 years) and do not reflect the real market mix between rechargeable and non rechargeable products.
- A calculation based on g/inhabitant/ year sends a clear message to the consumer and therefore encourages collection, reflects the mix, market evolution and consumption rates. The sales volume does not influence collection rates whereas consumer awareness and a measure of infrastructure efficiency does. Critically, portable battery collection targets should be achievable as they have to be workable in all 25 Member States and consumption rates in the Accession countries are significantly lower than in the EU 15.

☉ IT IS THEREFORE RECOMMENDED THAT MEPS SUPPORT A TARGET OF 120 G/INHABITANT/ YEAR AFTER 5 YEARS, TO BE MODULATED ACCORDING TO GEOGRAPHICAL ASPECTS (SMALL ISLANDS, RURAL AND MOUNTAIN AREAS), LOW POPULATION DENSITY, CONSUMER AWARENESS AND LEVEL OF EFFICIENCY OF WASTE INFRASTRUCTURE.