Parliamentary Assembly
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COUNCIL OF EUROPE
CONSEIL DE L'EUROPE

Doc. 12234
28 April 2010

Health hazards of heavy metals

Motion for a resolution
tabled by Mr Jean HUSS and other members of the Assembly

This motion has not been discussed in the Assembly and commits only those who have signed it

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Environmental contamination and exposure to toxic heavy metals such as mercury, cadmium and lead is a seriously growing problem throughout the world. Human exposure to heavy metals has risen dramatically in the last fifty years as a result of an exponential increase in the use of heavy metals in industrial processes and products. In today's industrial society, there is no escaping exposure to toxic chemicals and metals.

International scientific literature has brought to light a tremendous amount of evidence showing that heavy metals are extremely harmful to human beings. Heavy metals can trigger a series of immunological reactions such as sensitisation, multiple sclerosis and immune system depression. They have also been found to have reproductive and endocrine system disrupting effects. Neurotoxic effects occur directly by heavy metals passing the brain barrier and leading to a disturbance of the central nervous system, e.g. Parkinson's and Alzheimer's diseases and disturbance of foetal brain development.

Inevitably, when exposed to the same level of toxins, a child's body would react more than an adult's body. During the first months and years of life, children's organs develop rapidly, making them more prone to functional damage. The nervous system continues to develop throughout childhood and therefore children are especially vulnerable to toxic chemicals in their personal environment as well as in their food and water.

Primary prevention health strategies to reduce human exposure to heavy metals should be high on the political agenda of the in the Council of Europe member states. Political awareness and reactions often come too late, are too slow and not comprehensive enough. Measures to protect the life and health of European citizens affected by heavy metals should explicitly recognise the links between environment, health and human rights.

Signed (see overleaf)

Signed[1]*:*

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1. ALDE: Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe
EDG: European Democrat Group
EPP/CD: Group of the European People's Party
SOC: Socialist Group
UEL: Group of the Unified European Left