FURTHER RESTRICTING THE USE OF HARMFUL CHEMICALS IN EVERYDAY PRODUCTS

General Assembly, Third Committee

Issue Description:

Over the past few decades, scientists have discovered an increasing number of harmful chemicals present in everyday products used around the world. From asbestos, once widely used in construction before being conclusively linked to serious diseases such as cancer, to PFAS substances which have been used extensively in products such as non-stick cookware, waterproof clothing and food packaging. Concerns surrounding the long-term effects of chemical exposure have continued to grow. PFAS are particularly concerning because many of these substances are highly persistent in the environment and can accumulate in humans and other living organisms. The list of potentially harmful substances extends far beyond these two examples, and many chemicals currently in use have not yet been sufficiently studied to determine their long-term effects on human health and the environment.

Why has this issue not been resolved?

One of the main challenges is that some chemicals are extremely effective at fulfilling their intended purpose, which can make them difficult to replace. Their resistance to heat, water, corrosion or degradation may make them valuable in manufacturing, construction, agriculture and consumer products; however, the same properties that make these substances useful can also allow them to persist in the environment for decades or even longer. Consequently, chemicals can enter soil, water and food chains, where repeated exposure may affect ecosystems and accumulate in organisms. Humans can subsequently be exposed through food, drinking water, air, household dust and direct contact with consumer products.

Important involved organisations

The European Union is globally known as an organization controlling what substances are allowed to be used in commercial products, better known as the so called E-numbers, where the World Health Organization (WHO) are the main providers of research regarding the issue. The United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) further supports all organisations by improving information on chemicals in everyday products.

In short, we should improve global health and environment by preventing and limiting the use of harmful chemicals in product used everyday. Would this be food-related products, construction materials or even clothing, we should always limit the use of these products, since the environment and our health are more important than the slightly easier production and functionality of the products we use all the time.

Good luck with your resolutions delegates!

Esmay and Elias

Chairs of GA3