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## **A European Thematic Strategy for Natural Resources: Outlook for Key Stakeholders**

The Centre for European Policy Studies (CEPS), in cooperation with the Alliance for Beverage Cartons and the Environment (ACE) held a seminar on 7 February 2006 to provide key stakeholders with an opportunity to address the new challenges posed by the Thematic Strategy on the sustainable use of natural resources.

Key stakeholders who shared their opinions on this occasion included:

- Klaus Kogler, Acting Head of Unit, Sustainable Production and Consumption, DG Environment, European Commission
- John Hontelez, Secretary-General, European Environmental Bureau (EEB)
- Caroline Vogl, Austrian Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, Environment and Water Management
- Hans Valhkoff, Assistant to MEP Kartika Tamara Liotard, Rapporteur for the European Parliament on this Strategy
- Kevin Bradley, Director General, Alliance for Beverage Cartons and the Environment

Mr. Kogler opened the conference by giving an overview of the Thematic Strategy and emphasising the need to increase the efficiency of resources used in the EU and elsewhere while also ensuring that the environmental impact of the use of these resources is reduced. Overall, Mr. Kogler insisted on the need to secure 'decoupling' and thus exponentially reduce the negative impacts of resource use in a growing economy.

Mr Hontelez for his part explained that the EEB would have liked to see a Strategy with clear targets as requested in the 6<sup>th</sup> Framework Action Programme and one that would have called for an absolute decoupling objective with a list of specific materials that the strategy should focus on.

Speaking on behalf of the Austrian Presidency, Ms. Vogl provided an indication of timings and the Presidency's interest in the Thematic Strategy. She noted that although the strategy is not on the official agenda of the Presidency, it could potentially be addressed in March at the Summit and will most probably be adopted during the upcoming Finnish Presidency.



On behalf of MEP Liotard, Mr. Valhokff outlined what is perceived as both good points and weaker points of the Strategy. Positive elements of the strategy included the recognition that the EU's resources are depleting and that the economic gains of using natural resources are currently outpaced by production values. In terms of weaker elements, Mr. Valhokff pointed out that the strategy does not specify clear targets to be reached and that the timeline of 25 years seems very far ahead for changes to occur.

In response to the opinions presented by the panellists, Dr. Bradley, ACE Director General, began by expressing ACE's belief that the Thematic Strategy is a most useful starting point because natural resources are vital for Europe and must consequently be managed sustainably. He indicated that ACE and its members are already engaged in activities ensuring the sustainable use of resources needed for the production of beverage cartons. Such activities include a sustainable use of forest resources, a sustainable production aiming for eco-efficiency throughout the life cycle of the product and increasing recycling. Moving forward, Dr. Bradley indicated ACE's view that coordination at EU level will be needed while also recognising the need for a territorial to link resource use to land use. He also noted the need, but also the difficulty, in identifying effective indicators to measure the improvements towards the objectives of the Strategy.

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