

NIRJ DEVA
FORMER MEP
ACCUSES
THE EU OF
CRIMINAL
NEGLIGENCE



Nirj Deva, a former Vice President of the European Parliament's Development Committee, and Chairman of Symphony Environmental Technologies Plc, accused the EU at a high level meeting in China of damaging human health and the environment and stifling innovation by their improper use of what they call a "Precautionary Principle."

In a hard hitting speech in Chendu on 16th July at the High-Level Forum on Sustainable Urban Green Development on the Belt and Road, organized by the Development and Reform Commission of China, UN Habitat, China Centre for Urban Development and Chendu Municipal Government, Nirj Deva said: "Instead of innovating, and using technological solutions to problems; as mankind has always done as we moved from the caves and hunter-gathering to planetary exploration in a short span of 10,000 years, 21st century man particularly in Europe, has developed a mindset that instinctively wants to ban whatever they think might be causing a problem.

We have banned diesel, banned coal, tried to ban smoking, tried to ban alcohol, banned fertilizers, banned pesticides, banned plastics, banned antibiotics, banned sugar. Earlier using a so-called "Precautionary Principle" we banned DDT and have caused the deaths of 50 million people from resurgent malaria since 1965.

Deva said that solutions to today's problems will come from new discoveries, new inventions and new ways of surviving successfully in our long evolutionary journey. Addressing the problem of plastic waste which stays with us for hundreds of years; he accused the international community and the EU in particular of allowing massive islands of plastic waste to accumulate on the oceans without doing anything beside constantly drawing attention to the problem.

We have heard enough about the problem, but not enough about the solution. Pouring scorn on the campaign to ban all plastic packaging and so ban 36 percent of 400 million tons of plastic produced each year; he said this would destroy a 118 billion dollar per year industry employing globally nearly 2 million people. Worse than that, it will cause food-waste and sickness, because plastic is the best way to protect our food and water from contamination.

He said that the campaign to control waste through a so called New Plastic Economy supported by 150 global multinationals and NGOs was all very worthy and that efforts to reduce, re-use and recycle may eliminate plastic waste one day far in the future, but in the meantime, he said, nothing is being done to prevent plastic waste which gets into the environment from lying or floating around for 100 years. 8 million tons of it get into the sea each year.

He said that a solution to this problem has been available, for 20 years. It is a technology called oxo-biodegradation, which makes plastic convert rapidly into biodegradable materials if it escapes into the open environment. It has been tried and tested and applied in over 100 countries without receiving complaints from any customer that the product does not work, and no evidence of increased propensity to litter.

It has treated 1.9 million tonnes of plastic products, generating 140 million USD in revenues, These advanced plastic products have been recycled back into nature through oxo-biodegradation and yet the EU and the UN and others in the international community have been dragging their feet."



“Consequently in the same 20 years that this revolutionary technology has been available, the UN, the EU and other bodies who should have led the initiative have allowed more than 100 million tons of plastic to accumulate unnecessarily in the oceans.” As to the so called Precautionary Principle, there is a well-established procedure in the EU for deciding whether substances should be restricted or banned and it is set out in the REACH Regulation. In December 2017 the EU Commission acted under Article 69 to request the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) to study “oxo-degradable” plastics because the Commission thought that they created microplastics.

However, on 30th October 2018 (ten months into the study) ECHA advised that they were not convinced that microplastics are formed. If, and only if, ECHA had recommended a restriction, it would have to be considered by two committees, and there would have had to be a public consultation, before any restriction could be implemented.

None of this has been done, and any attempt to enforce a ban would therefore be legally invalid. The EU Commission has terminated the ECHA study and there is therefore no scientific evidence from the European Union’s own scientific experts to support any EU policy on oxo-degradable or oxo-biodegradable plastics. Nirj Deva said after the meeting that China should pay no attention to EU policy on this matter as it has been made without scientific justification and by ignoring its own legal procedures. In any event conditions in China are completely different than in Europe, where they have sophisticated waste management systems which will not be available throughout China for many years.

Deva called for an immediate high-level inquiry into whether the improper use of the “Precautionary Principle” is actually damaging human health and the environment which it is meant to protect.

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For more information, contact paula.hickford@d2w.net