



**PRESSE-MEDDELELSE · MITTEILUNG AN DIE PRESSE · PRESS-RELEASE · INFORMATION A LA PRESSE
ΑΝΑΚΟΙΝΩΣΗ ΓΙΑ ΤΟΝ ΤΥΠΟ · INFORMAZIONE ALLA STAMPA · MEDEDELING AAN DE PERS**

Brussels, 21 April 1983

TEN YEARS OF EUROPEAN COMMUNITY ENVIRONMENT POLICY
ADDRESS BY MR NARJES TO THE DIHT (*),
BONN, 21 APRIL 1983

Mr Narjes made the following remarks to the Environment Committee of the DIHT in an address on topical questions relating to environment policy:

In this comparatively new field, for which the Treaties do not provide any specific legal basis, the European Community has achieved a great deal in a decade:

Over 60 legal acts have been adopted concerning water and air pollution, waste treatment, noise abatement and the protection of natural resources. In the process, the Community has increasingly altered the emphasis from combating existing environmental damage to the prevention of pollution: environmental impact assessment, the promotion of clean technologies, research work and a rational environment policy. There can be no doubt that this method is much more effective in both environmental and economic terms. Nevertheless, in view of the urgent problems still awaiting a solution, the progress achieved so far is not sufficient. The scale of the programmes is out of all proportion to the resources available. The present dioxin affair is only one example among many. Another difficulty is the slow-moving decision-making process, particularly in the Council of Ministers.

Mr Narjes commented on the Third Environment Programme submitted at the end of 1981: the intention was to develop a comprehensive environment policy strategy based primarily on prevention. In this connection, he emphasized the importance of the proposal for a Directive on environmental impact assessment. Adoption of this proposal would represent a decisive step towards a rational preventive policy which would help conserve resources.

On the question of economics versus environmental protection, Mr Narjes disputed the widely-held opinion that there was a conflict here. He maintained that environment policy was nothing more than properly-conceived long-term economic policy. Environment policy was an important component of any structural policy. Consistency must be ensured. Sudden changes in the framework conditions created insecurity and adversely affected the propensity to invest and investment decisions. Mr Narjes emphasized the importance of the "Polluter Pays Principle", which ought to be strengthened by means of market-economic solutions.

(*) DIHT = Deutscher Industrie -und Handelstag (German Industrial and Trade Association, representing Chambers of Industry and Commerce).

Turning to certain topical questions, Mr Narjes referred specifically to "acid rain". As there was still some uncertainty as to the causes, more research was needed. The Commission would make its contribution in this connection: Mr Narjes said that a scientific symposium would be held in September. However, there was scarcely any doubt that forests were dying as a result of air pollution caused by sulphur dioxide and oxides of nitrogen. The damage caused was already enormous in terms of the sums of money involved. In the Federal Republic of Germany alone some 700 000 jobs were dependent on the wood industry. The costs of air pollution in terms of the economy as a whole were likely to be well in excess of the costs involved in stepping up efforts to improve air quality. The Commission intended to supplement the existing Community provisions concerning the maintenance of air purity (quality standards for sulphur dioxide and lead, and emission standards for vehicle exhaust gases) as quickly as possible. It had recently submitted to the Council of Ministers a proposal for a Directive on the limitation of emissions from stationary industrial plants, in accordance with which large new emission sources would require prior authorization, entailing purification of waste air in accordance with the state of the art. Provisions relating to large combustion plants were envisaged at a later stage, and a draft Directive on air quality standards for oxides of nitrogen was being prepared.

Mr Narjes criticized the fact that the transposition of Directives into national legislation was not always satisfactory where environmental matters were concerned. He had given instructions that use should be made of all the legal remedies available in the event of infringements of Community law. As a result, the number of cases before the European Court of Justice had increased considerably. Enforcement was a particular problem, particularly where only general obligations were provided for.

As regards the protection of the aquatic environment against dangerous substances, Mr Narjes emphasized that the 1976 framework Directive was still awaiting practical implementation to a large extent. So far implementing Directives had been adopted only for mercury from the alkali electrolysis in industry. The Council had been considering the cadmium Directive for over a year. This had resulted in a complete standstill where the implementation of the framework Directive was concerned - an unsatisfactory state of affairs in view of the 129 dangerous substances involved.

On the question of waste management, Mr Narjes turned to the controversial case of dioxin from Seveso. This affair clearly showed how important a clear-cut European solution was and the importance of complying with the European Community Directives. In order to settle the question of the transportation of dangerous wastes, the Commission had submitted a proposal for a Directive at the beginning of the year, i.e. before the dioxin affair. Mr Narjes expressed the hope that these events would help to ensure that a complete monitoring network for dangerous wastes could be set up this year.