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Working globally for a toxic free future

Media Release

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Toxic Additives in Plastics: Hidden Health Hazards Linked to Common Plastic Products

Today the National Toxics Network (NTN) joins the UNEP Regional Activity Centre for Sustainable Consumption and Production and the International Pollutants Elimination Network (IPEN) in releasing a collaborative and ground-breaking report on the [toxic additives in plastic and the implications for the circular economy](#).

The report references vast evidence from renowned scientific articles and journals on the most concerning groups of chemicals used in plastic production. The report identifies “substances of concern” in plastics that pose risks to human and environmental health including flame retardants, perfluorinated chemicals, phthalates, bisphenols, and nonylphenols. These substances, many of which are endocrine disrupting chemicals, are toxic additives in plastics that are commonly used in everyday consumer goods including: **children’s toys, food packaging, electronics, and textiles, upholstery, and furniture.**

"This report is very timely. The world is awakening to the global catastrophe of plastic waste pollution and its impacts on our health and environment. At the same time, the ‘Circular Economy’ is being widely adopted in many countries as the solution. This report is notable because it identifies hazardous chemical additives in common, widely available products and illustrates how they pose a threat to health and the environment whether in products, in waste, in recycling, landfill, or incineration. It is well past time to uphold the precautionary principle and ensure that the circular economy is protected and free from toxic substances throughout the full life cycle of plastic." States Dr Mariann Lloyd-Smith, NTN senior expert advisor.

Four key approaches are described in the report that can reduce the production and use of chemicals of concern, prevent regrettable substitutions, and realize a safe circular economy:

- Materials should be designed in accordance with goals of causing no harm to environmental and human health and achieving zero waste
- Investment must be made to develop new, safer materials and systems that avoid the production and use of plastics with hazardous chemical additives, and avoid the replacement of toxic additives with regrettable substitutions
- Industry collaboration will be key for industry to take responsibility for the hazardous materials they produce
- Transparent chemical composition labelling must be applied to all plastic materials

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