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Nominated for the Public Eye Award 2006 in
the category:

ENVIRONMENT

Nominated by: Greenpeace Switzerland

Novartis International, Ciba Speciality Chemicals, Syngenta International

Headquarters: Basel, Switzerland
Branch of trade: pharmaceuticals, chemicals, agribusiness
Turnover/ Net profit: *Novartis*: US\$ 28 billion / US\$ 5,7 billion, *Ciba SC*: CHF 7 billion / CHF 311 million, *Syngenta*: US\$ 7,2 billion / US\$ 762 million
CEOs: *Novartis*: Daniel Vasella, *Ciba SC*: Armin Meyer, *Syngenta Int.*: Heinz Imhof
Owned by: Publicly-traded corporations
Employees 2004: *Novartis*: 81'392, *Ciba SC*: 19'338, *Syngenta*: 19'500
WEF-Participant 2006: *Novartis*: yes, *Ciba SC*: yes, *Syngenta Int.*: not officially enrolled

Summary

The Swiss chemical companies Novartis International, Ciba SC and Syngenta International are nominated for a Public Eye Award in the environment category for their irresponsible practices in handling toxic waste. Greenpeace Switzerland assumes that highly toxic dioxin and dioxin products that accrued during the high times of chlorine chemistry in the 1950s and 60s, still lie in unsecured hazardous waste sites which threaten human life and the environment. Greenpeace demands that Novartis, Ciba SC and Syngenta fully cleanup the contaminated sites according to the highest international standards.

Information on the case and characteristics of irresponsible corporate behaviour

Swiss chemical companies Novartis, Ciba and Syngenta (respectively their predecessors Geigy AG, Ciba AG, Sandoz AG and Durand & Huguenin AG) generated considerable amounts of toxic waste during the high time of chlorine chemistry in Basel, Switzerland. At least 449,000 tons of such chemical waste products from pharmaceutical, agrochemical and dye production in the 1950s and 1960s are buried in several dumpsites around Basel (approx. 35,000 tons); in K llikon, Canton Aargau (300,000 tons); and in the Swiss Jura region of Bonfol (114,000 tons).

New research by Greenpeace has shown that not only conventional toxic waste, but also considerable amounts of highly toxic dioxin, were generated at the time. Greenpeace assumes that the dioxin must have been dumped in Bonfol, the only legal dumpsite on Swiss territory until 1975. The Basel Chemical Industry (BCI), representing the interests of Novartis, Ciba SC, Syngenta and other chemical companies, claims not to have data about dioxin disposal at Bonfol. They also cannot explain where the dioxin has gone. Dioxins are of the most toxic chemicals known to man and are categorized as so-called persistent organic pollutants (POPs) which are regulated by the

The deadline for the submission of the nominations was August 26th 2005. Later developments were considered in the summaries as far as known. 1

Stockholm Convention of 2001. This convention calls for the permanent destruction of POPs in stockpiles under the best available technique (BAT).

Affected communities, regional authorities, NGOs and politicians on the national level have been urging the chemical companies over recent years to cleanup its former dumpsites. The companies responded to these justified demands with a denial of responsibility. While the BCI has finally agreed to fully decontaminate dumpsites in Köllikon and Bonfol, the problem is still unresolved in at least twelve other dumpsites surrounding Basel. At these sites, the corporations are trying to avoid the decontamination standards prescribed by national law. In the case of Bonfol, the BCI failed to submit a feasible cleanup proposal that takes into consideration the existence of dioxins.

Consequences

The unsecured dumpsites (which include old gravel pits and stockpiles in the woods) are leaking and pollute groundwater in the region. Those in the surroundings of Basel pose a serious threat to the city's drinking water supply. Misleading information policies and inaction by the BCI in regard to dioxin puts the population and the environment in danger. According to Greenpeace Dioxin is likely to be released at the Bonfol site if the cleanup procedure there is not improved. Dioxin contamination can have severe consequences as shown by an accident in the Italian city of Seveso in 1976.

Current status and demands

In a press conference on 8 December 2005, the government of Canton Jura and the BCI presented preconditions for a continuation of the cleanup project at the Bonfol dumpsite. For more than one year the process was blocked due to unresolved questions regarding cost absorption and deficiencies in the cleanup project.

Greenpeace demands that Novartis, Ciba SC and Syngenta:

- fully cleanup contaminated dumpsites in Bonfol and the surroundings of Basel according to the highest international standards, the polluter-pays-principle, and a binding timetable;
- guarantee complete transparency and external control by independent experts during the decontamination process;
- disseminate lessons learned in the process so that they can serve as a model for other cleanup projects worldwide.

Detailed nominations: www.publiceye.ch/nominierungen

Further information and links:

- <http://info.greenpeace.ch/de/chemie/index>
- <http://w3.jura.ch/dib/>
- www.bci-info.ch