

Brussels, 5 September 2007

## **Consumers: European Commission to carry out two month review of toy safety controls**

***Following the decision by Mattel today to announce a third major recall, European Commissioner for Consumer Affairs Meglena Kuneva confirmed her intention to engage in a 2 month stocktaking exercise, using the case of the toy recalls this summer, to review the strengths and weaknesses of the consumer product safety mechanisms currently in place in Europe. Commissioner Kuneva has already informed her colleagues in the European Commission of her intention to carry out this review in the College meeting of August 29. The Commissioner met with the Chair of the European Parliament Committee for the Internal Market and Consumer Protection this week to discuss the details and to ask the European Parliament to contribute to the review. Commissioner Kuneva will present the results of her visit to China in July as well as her assessment of the events of the summer and the main elements of the toy safety review to the European Parliament in Brussels on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> September at 15.00. As part of the review process, Mattel has met twice in the last 10 days with Commissioner Kuneva's office. Commissioner Kuneva will speak with the CEO of Mattel tomorrow. The timetable of the main elements of the 2 month review process are listed below.***

EU Consumer Commissioner Meglena Kuneva, said, "The message to consumers across Europe is that there will be no compromise on consumer safety. With regard to the Mattel recall, my starting point is that a decision by a producer to recall a product when they suspect there is a risk to consumer safety is in principle a good thing. Responsible business recalls products if they suspect there is a risk to the health and safety of consumers. But as Consumer Commissioner it is also my job to ask tough questions. That is why we have had a second meeting today at official level in the Commission with Mattel. That is why I will speak with the Mattel CEO in person. I know that the European Commission's RAPID Alert system worked well over the summer, information was exchanged quickly and authorities were alerted and products withdrawn. I believe the current framework of rules we is up to the job. But I am determined that there will be no complacency when it comes to consumer safety, children and toys. I want to use this two-month period to check all the links in the chain. We must avoid knee-jerk reactions, but I want to be doubly sure that every single thing necessary is being done."

## **Timetable: Stocktaking review China – product safety – toys**

September – October 2007. Main elements of review process:

- 1. Meeting at official level between the European Commission and Mattel representatives (first meeting Aug 27-Sept 2, second meeting at official level Sept 4th).
- 2. August 29 2007 Commissioner Kuneva presents information note to College of Commissioners on China visit in July and events of the summer with regard to toy safety. Invites Commissioners Mandelson, Commissioner Kovacs, Commissioner Verheugen, Commissioner Kyprianou and Commissioner Ferrero Waldner to join her in a reflection, during a review period of two months, on product safety controls and our partnership with China. Conclusions to feed into EU China Summit November 28 2007.
- 3. September 12 2007: Commissioner Kuneva will have an exchange of views with European Parliament, Internal Market and Consumer Protection Committee, on her China visit, the Mattel recall, the New Approach Directives and the two month review of consumer product safety. (15.00 European Parliament Brussels)
- 4. Meeting Commissioner Kuneva and the Toy Industries of Europe (week of September 10-16, date tbc)
- 5. September-October ongoing. Main meetings on stocktaking exercise on China with Cabinets Verheugen, Mandelson and Kovac, Kyprianou and Ferrero-Waldner. To analyze existing system of market surveillance, to analyze the regulatory framework, to discuss the legal and technical mechanisms for an accelerated response, to discuss strengths and weaknesses of the system and practical solutions.
- 6. Deadline for feedback from National Surveillance Authorities on Mattel Recall (end Sept). The Commission in August asked National Surveillance Authorities to report back with an assessment of the success of the Mattel recall. This meeting will be followed by a meeting between the Commission and national surveillance authorities in early October in Brussels to discuss the strengths and weaknesses of the current system and the conclusions to be drawn from the experiences of recent months.
- 7. 1 – 5 October: Official visit of Commissioner Kuneva to US. Priority for the visit will be EU – US co-operation on product safety, China, exchange of information, enforcement issues, standardization.
- 8. End October: European Commission to receive EU China RAPEX Report on from the Chinese Authorities, setting out their enforcement actions as part of the EU RAPEX China System. The Chinese Authorities committed themselves during Commissioner Kuneva's visit to China in July to produce a very substantial report on their enforcement actions for the Commission by mid October.
- 9. 29 October-4 November 2007: Presentation of the conclusions of the stocktaking exercise. Preparation for the EU-China Summit (Nov 28)

## **Background: What is RAPEX**

RAPEX is an EU-wide rapid alert system for non-food dangerous products, coordinated by the Commission and linking market surveillance authorities in 30 European countries. When authorities take restrictive measures (ban on sale, withdrawal from the market, recall from consumers, ...) concerning a product posing a serious risk for the health and safety of consumers, they must notify the Commission which validates the notifications, translates it and distributes it to the authorities in all other MS – there is then a formal obligation on Member State Authorities to take follow up measures on their national markets and to inform the Commission.

<http://ec.europa.eu/rapex>

For RAPEX Annual Report 2006 see

[http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/reports/report\\_rapex\\_06\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/consumers/reports/report_rapex_06_en.pdf)

[MEMO/07/299](#)