



Brussels, 22 July 2014

To the President of the European Commission, Mr Jean-Claude Juncker

Subject: The position of Chief Scientific Advisor to the President of the European Commission

Dear Mr Juncker,

We are writing to you to express our concerns regarding the position of Chief Scientific Advisor to the President of the European Commission. This post was created by former Commission President Barroso at the suggestion of the United Kingdom, and was held by Ms Anne Glover since January 2012. The mandate of the Chief Scientific Adviser (CSA) is “to provide independent expert advice on any aspect of science, technology and innovation as requested by the President”.¹

We are aware that business lobbies urge you to continue with the practice established by Mr Barroso and even to strengthen the chief adviser’s formal role in policy making.² We, by contrast, appeal to you to scrap this position. The post of Chief Scientific Adviser is fundamentally problematic as it is based on the assumption that one person would be capable of advising on an extremely wide variety of complex and controversial issues. It concentrates too much influence in one person, and undermines in-depth scientific research and assessments carried out by or for the Commission directorates in the course of policy elaboration.

Until now, the role of Chief Scientific Adviser has been unaccountable, intransparent and controversial. While the current CSA and her opinions were very present in the media, the nature of her advices to the President of the European Commission remains unknown. We have not been able to obtain any information on what the Commission President has requested advice on, let alone what advice has been given. To the media, the current CSA presented one-sided, partial opinions in

¹ Cf. Ms Glover's webpage on the European Commission's website, http://ec.europa.eu/commission_2010-2014/president/chief-scientific-adviser/index_en.htm

² Letter from Business Europe to former Commission President Barroso, 6 May 2014. <http://www.bussinesseurope.eu/content/default.asp?PageID=568&DocID=33005>

the debate on the use of genetically modified organisms in agriculture, repeatedly claiming that there was a scientific consensus about their safety³ whereas this claim is contradicted by an international statement of scientists (currently 297 signatories) saying that it “misrepresents the currently available scientific evidence and the broad diversity of opinion among scientists on this issue.”⁴

We hope that you as the new Commission President will decide not to nominate a chief scientific adviser and that instead the Commission will take its advice from a variety of independent, multi-disciplinary sources, with a focus on the public interest. We remain at your disposal if you wish to receive more detailed explanations of our concerns.

Yours sincerely,

Hans Muilerman, Pesticide Action Network
Christoph Then, Testbiotech
Jamie Page, Cancer Prevention and Education Society
Claire Robinson, GM Watch and Earth Open Source
André Cicoella, Réseau Environnement Santé
Anne Stauffer, Deputy Director, Health & Environment Alliance (HEAL)
Nina Holland, Corporate Europe Observatory
Jorgo Riss, Director, Greenpeace European Unit

³ For instance: *No risk with GMO food, says EU chief scientific advisor*, Euractiv.com, 24 July 2012, <http://www.euractiv.com/innovation-enterprise/commission-science-supremo-endor-news-514072>

⁴ ENSSER Statement: *No scientific consensus on GMO safety*, 21 October 2013. <http://www.ensser.org/increasing-public-information/no-scientific-consensus-on-gmo-safety/>