



HEADLINE - Nicolas Hulot appointed Minister of State in charge of Ecological and Solidarity Transition



At the age of 62, the ecologist and ex-animator of "Ushuaia" finally becomes minister of the environment. Position he refused for more than 15 years, first to Jacques Chirac, to Nicolas Sarkozy and then to François Hollande. But Nicolas Hulot took the step by being named, Wednesday May 17, Minister of State in charge of Ecological Transition and solidarity within the government of Edouard Philippe. Nicolas Hulot would have been seduced by this new government neither right nor left. Indeed, this one affirms to the newspaper of 20h on France 2 that "the key to success in nature is diversity and it is also true in politics". Some NGOs and environmental policy-makers are satisfied with this appointment because they feared a policy of little concern for the protection of the environment. This fear was justified by the virtual absence of the ecology of President Emmanuel Macron's program and the appointment of a prime minister deemed pro-nuclear. However, this appointment leaves some skeptics. While the new government is being blamed for its lack of coherence, Cécile Duflot, the former environmental minister, warns Nicolas Hulot against the risk of being "only a trophy". The first sensitive dossier to be managed by the Minister of Ecological and Solidarity Transition is the Notre-Dame-des-Landes International Airport project. The government is launching a mediation whose outcome is still uncertain. The successor of Ségolène Royal affirms on this subject that "all the options are on the table". The nuclear issue is also at the heart of the discussions. Nicolas Hulot assures that the share of nuclear power will increase from 75% to 50% by 2025 and that the closure of the Fessenheim nuclear power plant will take place.



HEALTH - Still no European progress on endocrine disrupters

It has been eight years since the European Commission undertook to regulate the issue of endocrine disruptors. However, no project has so far succeeded, the last one having triggered an important wave of opposition. At stake, an extremely strict definition of endocrine disrupters, qualified by several experts as inapplicable and unfit to protect the population. The Endocrine Society stressed that chemicals whose toxicity is certified by proven scientific evidence would have been difficult to meet the requirements of the definition, both of which were high. Some, however, have hoped for a breakthrough by seeing the subject on the agenda of the Standing Committee on Plants, Animals, Food and Feed (SCOPAFF) scheduled for 17 May. However, discussions were postponed, particularly following the recent French presidential elections. Appointed the same day, the new Minister of Ecology, Nicolas Hulot, had been unable to give the new government's directives on the issue. The elected candidate, Emmanuel Macron, had made the prohibition of endocrine disrupters "as soon as there are less toxic solutions" one of his campaign promises. If it seems unlikely that France can go it alone on the subject, we can hope that it initiates a more protective dynamic within the European Union.



WASTE - A floating bottom in the sea to the conquest of plastic waste

A floating rod system should come into action within a year to collect plastic waste in the sea. The bold project would see the light of day two years ahead. The system is simple. Supported by an anchor in depth, the barriers will move like a waste following the marine currents. The shape and angle of the flange which will connect all of these barriers will thus make it possible to collect waste at low cost and in an efficient manner. Indeed, by using the same route as waste, the system should recover 50% of plastic waste within 5 years. Originally, the frame was supposed to clean 42% of plastic waste in 10 years. Estimates are therefore encouraging when it is known that eight million tons of plastics are found in the seas every year. Boyan Slat, the inventor of this process, is only 22 years old but gives hope: are we at the beginning of the end of the 7th continent of waste?



ENVIRONMENT AND WASTE - Chrysotile asbestos always freely marketable

Dangerous for health but also polluting, chrysotile asbestos has not been added to the list of chemicals of the Rotterdam Convention. As a reminder, the purpose of this agreement is to regulate the export of hazardous chemicals from one signatory country to another. To this end, binding measures are numerous. Trade in these products is thus limited to protect the environment and health of nationals of Member States. Unfortunately, the inclusion of chrysotile asbestos, known as white asbestos, in the convention has been blocked by several countries including Russia, Syria and India. However, in accordance with CLP regulations, asbestos is considered to be Category 2 CMR. The non-inclusion of this chemical in Annex III to the Convention is therefore of concern. Each year two million tons of asbestos are mined and sold mainly in developing countries. The health and environmental risks associated with this product are therefore always important and topical. It has to be said that the situation will not change until a veto for each Member State can prevent the inclusion of this product in the Convention. Moreover, it is for this reason that several African countries have mobilized to propose the modification of this mechanism.



Court of Justice of the European Union

**Plenary Assembly
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The Court of Justice of the European Union has just delivered an opinion stating that the "new generation" agreement of free trade between the European Union and the Republic of Singapore does not return to the exclusive competence of the Union. To be valid, the agreement must therefore be validated not only by the Council and the European Parliament, but also by each of the national parliaments. The Court held that certain provisions, in particular those relating to the protection of investments and the settlement of disputes between investors and the State, "can not be adopted without the consent of [the latter]". This Opinion sheds particular light at a time when national parliaments have to ratify the very contested "CETA" treaty. The latter is strongly contested by environmentalists and small farmers who see it as a threat to biodiversity and sustainable development. However, the opinion of the Court of Justice is only partially favorable. Indeed, while defining the subjects on which the agreement of national parliaments is required, it reserves sustainable development to the exclusive competence of the European Union. The Court of Justice of the European Union has nevertheless given a breath of hope to the opponents of the free trade treaty. The latter is already the subject of numerous appeals, in particular before the Constitutional Council.



ENERGY - Engie sells hydrocarbon exploration and production

On Thursday, May 11, the energy group announced a major milestone in its transformation to become the world leader in energy transition. The French energy company entered into exclusive negotiations to cede to the British group Neptune Energy its activity of exploration-production of hydrocarbons. The transaction is an important step in its € 15 billion divestiture plan for the period 2016-2018 to refocus its low carbon strategy on renewable energies (wind, solar, etc.), gas supply and utilities, energetic efficiency. Engie indicated that it had received a "firm and irrevocable offer" for the sale of its interest in its Exploration & Production International business. The operation should enable the group to reduce its net debt by € 2.4 billion, which was € 24.8 billion at the end of 2016. This subsidiary, which employs 1,622 employees, extracted 148,000 barrels of oil equivalent, of which Two thirds of gas, and has reserves estimated at 672 million barrels. The transaction is expected to be completed in the first quarter of 2018, enabling Engie to further reduce its carbon footprint and exposure to fluctuations in energy markets. "It's historical, it changes the face of the group," said Engie's financial director Judith Hartmann in a conference call.



HEALTH ENVIRONMENT - Anses Alert: packaging contaminates our food

The sanitary safety agency has highlighted the risks associated with mineral oils and encourages manufacturers to adopt new manufacturing processes. These oils are present in many paper and cardboard food packages. Although used for common foods, the way these oils have been packaged can be harmful to health. In a notice published on 9 May, the National Agency for Food Safety, Environment, and Labor (ANSES) revealed that mineral oils present in inks and adhesives in paper and Of cardboard are spreading in the food that is in contact with the packaging. ANSES recommended "reducing the contamination of foodstuffs by mineral oils", hydrocarbon derivatives that are sometimes carcinogenic. Two categories of oils made up of hydrocarbons are implicated by experts: mineral oil aromatic hydrocarbons and mineral oil saturated hydrocarbons (MOSH). "Given the genotoxic and mutagenic nature highlighted for some MOAH, ANSES considers that it is necessary to reduce as a priority the contamination of foodstuffs by these compounds". ANSES therefore encourages manufacturers to "limit consumer exposure" by using "printing inks, glues, additives and processing aids" without MOAH in the manufacture. The health agency recommends applying the same precautionary principle to products used in the field of printing.



POLLUTION - Diesel: 38,000 deaths in the world in 2015 due to exceeding anti-pollution standards



The editors of the scientific journal "Nature" denounce the exceedances of the standards authorized by diesel vehicles. Releases of fine particulate matter and nitrogen oxides (NOx) into the atmosphere would cause 107,600 premature deaths each year worldwide. 38,000 of them could be avoided if the standards were met.

The three areas most polluted by diesel in the world have been highlighted. Europe is leading with 11,500 premature deaths per year, followed by India with 9,700 deaths and finally China with 9,000 deaths. NOx emissions from diesel vehicles are 40 times more harmful to humans than CO2 released from petrol vehicles, according to Nature. In addition, existing standards are more commonly transgressed by diesel, voluntarily or simply because laboratory tests do not reflect actual use on road. In order to remedy this, it would first be necessary to have homologation tests closer to actual use. There is also a tax leverage. Tax advantage in Europe, nearly 68% of vehicles are diesel in France compared with 4% in the United States. Reducing diesel and enforcing standards would save 174,000 lives per year by 2040. It should also be noted that the pollution is highest in the passenger compartment of the vehicle.