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Centre for Environmental Justice

20/A, Kuruppu Road, Colombo 08, Sri Lanka.

20/A, කුරුපු පාර, කොළඹ 08.

Tel/Fax: ++94 -11-2683282

e-mail: info@ejustice.lk web: www.ejustice.lk



Press Release

Paint manufacturers must protect children's health- *Appeal to recall all leaded paints in the market*

15 March 2010, Colombo- We are alarmed by the massive green washing campaign conducted by paint manufacturers regarding the lead in paint research conducted by Toxics Link and IPEN in collaboration with the Centre for Environmental Justice, Sri Lanka and ten countries.

“Instead of pin pointing faults of the research, paint industries have a moral responsibility to test their products themselves and bring down the levels of heavy metals including lead, to the acceptable standards for protecting the health of children in Sri Lanka” says Hemantha Withanage of the Centre for Environmental Justice.

The Paint Manufacturers' Association claims in their advertisement appearing in some news papers on 14th March 2010 titled “The Truth” that they have “collectively undertaken to reduce and eliminate harmful substances in their products portfolio including lead, mercury and chromium to internationally accepted levels.” However, they also say that “we absolve ourselves from paints imported into Sri Lanka as well as manufactured by a large number of unregulated small-time manufacturers.”

We thank Paint Manufacturers' Association and some individual companies for their active engagement in the aftermath discussions of the launching of research findings. However, as a public interest Environmental Group we are concerned about the entire paint industry. As part of the **Corporate Social Responsibility** we believe that it is their responsibility to eliminate lead. Therefore, we urge paint companies to eliminate lead in the new decorative paints and also recall all their decorative paint products with high lead concentration available for sale in the market.

Once again we reiterate that 68% of enamel paint samples tested revealed very high lead levels. It was found that some samples contain lead as high as 137, 325 ppm. We also reiterate that no manufacturer or retailer of paints in Sri Lanka can claim that their paints are free of lead without presenting systematic, independent test results that can substantiate such a claim.

We are very much concerned about the dead silence of the Government agencies regarding this matter. It is clear that except some products, others do not adhere to the current SLS standards which were produced in 1990. These voluntary standards are not sufficient for eliminating lead in paint. Lead in paints has poisoned the nation over several decades due to failure of the government agencies to regulate the industry. Once again we reiterate that the Consumer Affairs

Authority, Ministry of Health and Nutrition, Sri Lanka Standards Institution should take action to provide mandatory standards and to enact rules and regulations to control the paint industry. The Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources, who is a party to **Strategic Approach to International Chemicals Management (SAICM)** which is a policy framework to foster the sound management of chemicals, should take immediate action to eliminate lead in paints which has affected over 40 million children worldwide.

For over half a century the paint industry has been aware of the grave health impacts that lead in paints has on children who lick baby cots, suckle toys, or simply ingest lead laden household dust. Lead can irreversibly lower IQ, and also cause a series of co-ordination skill deficiencies.

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More information please contact: Hemantha Withanage, Executive Director and Chamali Liyanage, Environmental Officer. Telephone 0112683282 email: info@ejustice.lk