

Statement on the WHO recommendation to add GBL and BDO to Schedule I of the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances

Brussels, 24 February 2015

DIGITALEUROPE represents the digital technology industry in Europe. This is an important sector that forms the backbone of the digital single market, economy and society.

We strongly urge EU Member States which are also Members of the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Drugs (CND) to vote against the listing of Gamma-butyrolactone (GBL) (CAS No. 96-48-0) and 1,4-butanediol (BDO) (CAS No 110-63-4) on the Convention on Psychotropic Substances at the Vote of the CND that will take place on 13 March in Vienna.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has recommended to the United Nations Commission on Narcotic Substances that both GBL and BDO be added to Schedule I of the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances. Both GBL and BDO are widely used industrial chemicals, including in the information and communications technology (ICT) and electronics industry and its global supply chain. If this recommendation is approved at an upcoming meeting of this Convention, the use of these chemicals would be restricted to certain scientific and medical uses and the ICT industry would effectively be prohibited from continuing legitimate uses of these substances critical to the manufacture of its products. Countries should ensure that GBL and BDO are not listed under the 1971 Convention on Psychotropic Substances.

GBL and BDO are Critical to the ICT Industry

- GBL is used as a carrier solvent in lithography process formulations in the semiconductor industry. There are currently no substitutes to GBL for these critical functions.
- GBL and BDO are also essential precursors in the production of N-methylpyrrolidone, a material vital in the production of semiconductors, batteries, and electronic motors amongst other uses.
- GBL is used widely in electrolytic capacitors and integrated circuits (ICs).
- BDO is used to manufacture poly-butyl-terephthalate (PBT) resins that are used in the connector and automotive industry.
- GBL and BDO are important components of polyurethane intermediates used in inks.

Are Alternatives to GBL and BDO Available?

For many of these uses, alternatives are not currently available. Where possible, replacement of these chemicals could take several years and require significant investment. The ICT industry would first need

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to identify potentially suitable substitutes (with no guarantee of a positive outcome), and then demonstrate that these substitutes can be successfully incorporated into existing manufacturing processes.

What is the Impact of Restricting these Chemicals?

ICT products enable broad benefits across society. A restriction of legitimate industrial and commercial uses of GBL and BDO in the ICT industry would impact not only the availability of these products but the broad range of social and economic benefits that are enabled by these technologies worldwide. A restriction of GBL and BDO would in effect prohibit essential components in electronics such as semiconductors, capacitors and integrated circuits, thereby restricting the availability of computers, telecommunications and consumer electronics.

We thank you for your attention and support on this important matter and we remain at your disposal to provide additional information.

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