



## **SPEECH FOR THE OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE OECD *GLOBALRECALLS* PORTAL**

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How can parents know whether a toy that they buy for their child is free from toxic substances? How can we know whether it is safe to plug in a hair dryer without getting an electric shock? And how can retailers ensure that the products they put on their shelves will not cause harm? We all need to be certain that the products we buy are safe.

Increased cross border trade and more complex global supply chains have made the job of ensuring product safety more challenging. It is difficult to track the safety of the many globally-sourced components that go into a product. At the same time, inspection of the growing number of imported goods at borders is limited.

In the past decade, we have seen increased concerns about unsafe products which have had to be taken off the shop shelves, at the same time, in different countries. This has led to calls for swifter and more effective solutions. The stakes are high as the cost of treating product-related injuries worldwide exceeds USD 1 trillion per year.

The OECD responded to the challenges in 2010, with a ten-point action plan to improve co-ordination, co-operation and information sharing. To help regulators address product safety issues and to ensure consumers and businesses get the information about the products they need, we developed the global portal on product recalls that we are launching today.

This is a unique web site which will bring together information about unsafe products from around the world, in a timely fashion. Many jurisdictions regularly publish product safety recalls on their own government websites but this information may be hard to access and difficult to understand due to language barriers.

The OECD portal will make it easier for all to keep up to date about recent consumer product recalls, excluding foodstuff and pharmaceuticals. The information that is collected will be available in many languages, making it widely available to consumers across all continents. Consumers will now be able to check whether a product which they want to buy has been recalled in another country. Businessmen, importers and retailers will similarly be able to learn about emerging problems more quickly, enabling them to take the necessary action to prevent product-related accidents and injuries. Finally, the portal has the potential to become a valuable tool for governments to help increase the speed and efficiency of their enforcement actions, within and across jurisdictions.

This is a global initiative which is very much in line with the OECD's commitment to develop *better policies for better lives*.

I would like to congratulate the members of the OECD Working Party on Consumer Product Safety for their determination to develop this innovative portal. It is an ambitious and promising project. I would particularly like to acknowledge Australia, Canada, the European Commission and the United States for piloting this initiative, and the GS1 for making the product taxonomy available to us. Also, special thanks to the European Commission for hosting this event as a part of the International Product Safety Week.

Now, that the portal has been launched, the working party is looking forward to expanding the number of countries taking part in the project. This includes non-OECD countries. With the growth in global trade and so many people shopping on the internet, there is an increasing need to get as many countries as possible participating in the *GlobalRecalls* portal and working collaboratively on safety issues.