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Dear Mr Bates,

Thank you for your letter of 5 August 2011 on the public consultation on options to reduce the use of plastic carrier bags. Commissioner Potočník has asked me to reply to your letter.

The consultation on plastic carrier bags was launched in response to numerous calls by citizens, Members of the European Parliament, ministers in the Environment Council of 14<sup>th</sup> March to work towards solutions to reduce the use of plastic carrier bags. Furthermore, putting into discussion the use of a specific packaging, which is already subject to specific national measures in a majority of Member States, is also a mean of preserving the objectives of the Directive and ensuring its correct implementation.

The public consultation attracted a vivid interest from citizens and stakeholders and showed broad support for EU action to reduce the environmental impacts of the use of plastic carrier bags. Nevertheless, we agree that the solution is complex and it implies a combination of instruments at various level of governance, starting from awareness raising, incentives for more resource efficient products (both at the level of producers and consumers), performing waste collection and management systems. Across its different policies and more specifically the Sustainable Consumption and Production Action Plan<sup>1</sup>, the Thematic Strategy on prevention and recycling of waste<sup>2</sup>, the Resource Efficiency Roadmap<sup>3</sup>, the Commission is working on all these aspects at the same time, in cooperation with the Member States, industry and public society at large.

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<sup>1</sup> COM/2008/0397 final

<sup>2</sup> COM/2005/0666 final

<sup>3</sup> COM(2011) 571 final

Given these complexities, we need to further assess the exact means and consequences of possible EU action. In this sense, the options put forward by the consultation are not exhaustive and stakeholders may always send more in-depth contributions that we shall carefully analyse. The Commission will also start a broader reflection process on plastic waste in the environment and the associated inefficient use of resource by means of a Green Paper currently in preparation.

In parallel, the Commission will conduct an impact assessment on options to reduce the impacts of the use of plastic carrier bags and all contributions will feed into this process. Depending on the findings of the impact assessment (which will cover environmental, economic and social aspects), the Commission may propose measures at EU level in 2012. Any follow up to the actions will be published on the Europa packaging website: <http://ec.europa.eu/environment/waste/packaging/events.htm>.

Yours sincerely,

Head of Unit