

Vienna Declaration of Environmental Standards for Healthcare Facilities

We, the participants of the first International Healthcare Congress on Sustainable Products and Practices “CleanMed Europe” assembled in Vienna from 6-8 October 2004 declare our commitment to realize the following principles:

Continually increasing pollution and the subsequent damage caused to natural ecosystems is seriously threatening the health of humans around the world. The operation of healthcare facilities is contributing to these environmental and health impacts. Society expects healthcare professionals not only to work at curing patients but also to prevent diseases while maintaining health. We strongly recognize the need to transform healthcare in a way, so that healthcare is ecologically sustainable and no longer a source of harm to public health and the environment.

Environmental protection shall be a main principle for the operation of healthcare facilities. Environmental considerations shall be a main management principle and be taken into account in all decisions, procedures and practices without impairing the quality of care. That provides healthcare professionals with the credibility to advocate necessary ecological changes in society and to give good examples for a more sustainable way of living.

We recognize our responsibility for the people working and staying in healthcare facilities and consider avoiding pollution as a major contribution to health and wellbeing of employees, patients and visitors.

Binding environmental standards shall be established in healthcare facilities for all relevant topics and areas, including:

- ▶ Apply strict environmental criteria for the selection of suppliers and products (green procurement)
- ▶ Whenever possible without affecting health care quality and safety, substitute products manufactured out of unnatural compounds like PVC (polyvinyl chloride), persistent toxic chemicals or heavy metals, with ones fitting into the natural materials cycles (break down easily in nature)
- ▶ Use organically grown and fair traded food, making up at least 30% of all food cost
- ▶ Use energy generated from renewable sources
- ▶ Reduce consumption and strive for an efficient use of all resources: materials, products, energy and water
- ▶ Always consider the possibility to replace one-way items and implement the reesterilisation of medical products
- ▶ Build and renovate healthcare facilities toxics free, with low-energy consumption, following green design and healing principles.
- ▶ Preserve green areas of healthcare facilities in an ecologically sound way and transform them into healing environments. Make people aware how precious they are.
- ▶ Inform employees, patients and the public about all relevant environmental aspects and activities of your healthcare facility
- ▶ Develop a comprehensive environmental policy, set up environmental programmes with goals and measures, build up an environmental organisation and use environmental management systems for implementation.

Environmental protection and health protection both are major national and international policy goals. Taking that into account, the European Union and national governments should establish and extend the necessary legal framework for binding environmental standards in society and for healthcare facilities.