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Nanotechnology Development Suffers from Lack of Risk Research Plan, Inadequate Funding & Leadership

WASHINGTON—The successful development of nanotechnology—with its potential to help provide new medical treatments, sustainable energy, and 21st century jobs—is being jeopardized by the lack of a clear federal strategy for examining possible environmental, health and safety risks and by inadequate funding for this work.

Today, before a U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Science hearing entitled *Research on Environmental and Safety Impacts of Nanotechnology: What are the Federal Agencies Doing?*, Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies Chief Science Advisor Dr. Andrew Maynard testified that “Nanotechnology is no longer a scientific curiosity. It is in the workplace, the environment and the home. But if people are to realize nanotechnology’s benefits, the federal government needs a master plan for identifying and reducing potential risks. This plan should include a top-down risk research strategy, sufficient funding to do the job, and the mechanisms to ensure that resources are used effectively.”

In his testimony, Maynard proposes that “The federal government needs to invest a minimum of \$100 million over two years in targeted risk research in order to lay a strong, science-based foundation for safe nanotechnology.” According to Maynard’s analysis, despite investing more than \$1 billion annually on nanotechnology research, U.S. government spending on highly relevant nanotechnology risk research is only \$11 million per year.

Maynard’s testimony, which is available online at www.nanotechproject.org, draws heavily from his new report, *Nanotechnology: A Research Strategy for Addressing Risk*. His report has been widely praised by science professionals and policymakers, including Britain’s Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA) in London, England. In a statement, DEFRA described Maynard’s report as “a very helpful contribution to international discussions on research needs in this [nanotechnology risk] area.”

DEFRA will launch a Voluntary Reporting Scheme for engineered nanoscale materials on Friday, September 22. Alongside government scientific research, the purpose of this program is to gather data to better understand the properties and characteristics of different engineered nanoscale materials and to allow for a more informed debate about the nature of appropriate controls. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is considering a similar program.

About Nanotechnology

Nanotechnology is the ability to measure, see, manipulate and manufacture things usually between 1 and 100 nanometers. A nanometer is one billionth of a meter; a human hair is roughly 100,000

nanometers wide. More than \$32 billion in products containing nano-materials were sold globally last year. But 2014, Lux Research projects that \$2.6 trillion in manufactured goods will incorporate nanotechnology.

Despite rapid commercialization, the majority of the American public has heard little or nothing about nanotechnology. A new poll, released this week by the Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies, shows that while public awareness of nanotechnology is increasing, fully 69% of Americans have heard little or nothing about the technology. Poll results are online at: www.nanotechproject.org.

The **Project on Emerging Nanotechnologies** is an initiative launched by the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars and The Pew Charitable Trusts in 2005. It is dedicated to helping business, government and the public anticipate and manage possible health and environmental implications of nanotechnology. For more information about the project, log on to www.nanotechproject.org.

The **Pew Charitable Trusts** is a national charitable organization serving the public interest by informing the public, advancing policy solutions and supporting civic life. Based in Philadelphia, with an office in Washington, D.C., the Trusts will invest \$248 million in fiscal year 2007 to provide organizations with fact-based research and practical solutions for challenging issues.

The **Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars** is the living, national memorial to President Wilson established by Congress in 1968 and headquartered in Washington, D.C. The Center establishes and maintains a neutral forum for free, open, and informed dialogue. It is a nonpartisan institution, supported by public and private funds and engaged in the study of national and international affairs.

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