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PRESS RELEASE

UNFCCC Executive Secretary Calls on Transport Sector to Proactively Help Shape Copenhagen Climate Change Deal

(Leipzig, 29 May 2008) – Speaking at the International Transport Forum in Leipzig, Germany UNFCCC Executive Secretary Yvo de Boer on Thursday called on key stakeholders in the transport sector to help shape the UN climate change deal that will be clinched in Copenhagen at the end of 2009.

The international community agreed to launch formal negotiations to come to a long-term international agreement at the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali in 2007, including a shared long-term vision and enhanced action on mitigation, adaptation, technology and finance. Negotiations got underway in Bangkok in March of this year.

“You have a choice,” he said. “The question is whether you as transport stakeholders are willing to proactively shape the Copenhagen deal or have your policies shaped by it.”

Data submitted to the UNFCCC shows that, in industrialized countries, greenhouse gas emissions from transport are expected to increase by 30.5% by 2010 against the baseline of 1990. This is the highest of all increases in sectoral emissions. According to the International Energy Agency, global emissions from transport are expected to increase by 80% by 2030 compared to current levels.

“All of the current trends in transport fly in the face of what science tells us is required,” said the UN’s top climate change official. “Developed countries now need to start thinking hard about what short and medium-term sectoral emission reductions they want to commit to in the transport sector, along with what interim targets they want to build in on the way”.

Last year, the UN’s Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, said that global greenhouse gas emissions need to peak over next 10 to 15 years and dramatically drop by at least 50% against 2000 levels by the middle of the century in order to stabilize global mean temperature increases around 2 to 2.4 °C. For industrialized countries, this means that reductions by 2020 between 25 and 40 % based on the 1990 levels would be required.

“Present political action in the transport sector is woefully inadequate,” said the UN’s top climate change official. “New technologies will certainly be part of the answer. But we simply cannot afford to wait for ‘silver bullet’ solutions which may only be commercially available in the future,” he said.



The UN's top climate change official mentioned ambitious CO2 standards for cars, integrated transport strategies and emissions trading as potential ways to tackle the problem. He also called on transport officials meeting in Leipzig to consider the extent to which international transport could be included in an emissions trading system established as part of the Copenhagen agreement. Emissions from international transport to date do not fall under the UN's Kyoto Protocol.

"Linking the transport sector to an existing emissions trading scheme would allow for cost-effective reductions of GHG emissions across sectoral borders," said Yvo de Boer.

The UNFCCC Executive Secretary also spoke to the need to improve the quality of data on transport. There is presently no common set of internationally recognized indicators for measuring, reporting and verifying national and international action on mitigation of climate change in the transport sector.

"We cannot master what we cannot measure", he said. "Developing a table of indicators for transport and climate change, as input to the UN climate change process, would be the task of the community of international transport experts."

In addition, industrialized countries should support developing countries in their efforts to improve their data basis.

The next round of UN-sponsored global climate change negotiations is set to begin in Bonn, Germany, on 2 June. Two more rounds of negotiations will taking place this year - in Accra, Ghana (21 to 27 August) and in Poznan, Poland (1 to 12 December). A series of four major UNFCCC negotiating sessions are planned for 2009, culminating at the UN Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen in December.

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See also <<http://unfccc.int>>

About the UNFCCC

With 192 Parties, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has near universal membership. It is the parent treaty of the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, which has to date 182 member Parties. Under the Protocol, 37 States, consisting of highly industrialized countries and countries undergoing transition to a market economy, have legally binding greenhouse gas (GHG) emission limitation and reduction commitments, while developing countries have non-binding obligations to limit emissions. The ultimate objective of both treaties is to stabilize GHG concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that will prevent dangerous human interference with the climate system.