



For use of the media only.

PRESS RELEASE

UNFCCC Executive Secretary: OPEC part of the solution to climate change, not part of the problem

(Riyadh, 15 November 2007) – Speaking at a high level OPEC Seminar in Riyadh, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, Yvo de Boer, stated that the fight against climate change can open up considerable opportunities for OPEC's economic development.

"International action on climate change is a war against emissions, not a war against oil", he said. "Oil will continue to play a pivotal role in the global energy mix for many decades to come, not least due to growing global energy demand. But oil will have to be decarbonised with adequate technologies. OPEC can deliver a big part of the solution to climate change," he added.

According to the UN's top climate change official, the decisive implementation of stringent emission reduction targets by industrialised countries will significantly drive the further development and deployment of such technologies.

"With appropriate technology development and deployment, essential fossil fuels can and will continue to play their role," Mr. de Boer said. "In this way, oil exporting countries need not fear that a shift to a low-carbon world economy would hurt their economies and can play a pivotal role in ensuring that international negotiations on a post-2012 climate change are launched this year," he added.

Negotiations on a new international climate change deal are expected to be launched at the UN Climate Change Conference in Bali in December. In order to avoid a gap after the end of the Kyoto Protocol's first phase in 2012, the negotiations will need to conclude in 2009 to allow enough time for ratification.

"Whilst there are several options that would allow oil-exporting countries to use the efforts that target climate change to drive a global transformation away from carbon-based development in their economies, a political solution on the global scale post-2012 - under the umbrella of the United Nations - is urgently required," said Yvo de Boer.

Mr. de Boer addressed OPEC Energy Ministers at the same time as the UN's Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) meeting in Valencia discusses the synthesis of IPCC reports published earlier this year which point to dramatic impacts of climate change under a business-as-usual scenario, such as rising sea levels, drought and water scarcity.



"Given the latest science being presented in Spain right now, it is increasingly clear that the world's development path is not sustainable and that greenhouse gas emissions have to be reduced to secure the very survival of humanity," said Yvo de Boer. "At the same time, the threat of waning revenue from oil can be turned into an opportunity," he added.

According to the IPCC, an array of new technologies can help reduce emissions, such as carbon dioxide capture and storage (CCS). Under a global CO₂ scenario that ensures greenhouse gas emissions are stabilised, CCS in power generation, industry and fuel transformation could account for 20% of CO₂ savings.

A future climate change regime could also include carbon dioxide capture and storage in the Clean Development Mechanism (CDM). The CDM permits industrialized countries to invest in sustainable development projects in developing countries, and thereby generate tradable emission credits.

Technologies such as hydrogen production and non-fuel uses of oil such as the production of lubricants and plastics are set to maintain the position of oil as an important international commodity well into the future.

For further information and to schedule an interview in Riyadh, please contact:

John Hay, Spokesman, tel.: (+49-228) 815-1404, mobile: (+49-172) 258-6944, email: jhay(at)unfccc.int

To schedule interviews outside of the high-level OPEC seminar, please contact Carrie Assheuer, Public Information and Media Assistant, tel.: (+49-228) 815-1005, email: press(at)unfccc.int

About the United Nations Climate Change Conference - Bali, 2007

This year's United Nations Climate Change Conference (3-14 December) will be presided over by Indonesian Environment Minister Rachmat Witoelar, with support from the UN's Climate Change Secretariat. More than 10 thousand participants are expected to attend. The main goal of the conference is to launch negotiations on a new international climate change agreement. The conference will not deliver a fully negotiated and agreed climate deal but is aimed to set the necessary wheels in motion. Parties are expected to agree the key areas which the new agreement should cover, such as mitigation (including avoided deforestation), adaptation, technology and financing. They also are also expected to agree on 2009 as the year the negotiations will conclude.

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 176 member Parties. Under the Protocol, 36 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.