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European Car Industry opposes recent statements of Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas regarding CO2 Commitment

The European car industry firmly opposes statements of European Environment Commissioner Stavros Dimas, made public last Friday. Mr Dimas implied car manufacturers don't respect their CO2 Commitment and called for "legislation to cut CO2 emissions from cars soon".

The European car manufacturers are fully committed to reducing CO2 emissions of passenger cars and their voluntary agreement from 1998. This agreement runs until 2008 and its final results won't be available before 2010. The car industry recognises the decrease in CO2 emissions has recently slowed. This is due to strong customer demand for larger and safer vehicles and disappointing consumer acceptance of extremely fuel-efficient cars, which have been brought into the market in line with the CO2 Commitment. EU regulatory developments, in particular concerning safety and air pollution, and a weaker European economy also had counter-productive effects.

The CO2 Commitment explicitly states that factors such as regulation, market changes and economic circumstances have to be taken into account. The Association of European Car Manufacturers (ACEA) asks Commissioner Dimas to respect this.

The efforts and achievements of the car industry to reduce CO2 emissions remain without comparison and should not be disregarded. To date, results are in line with the CO2 Commitment. According to its requirements, regulatory measures are therefore neither envisaged nor necessary.

The problem of reducing greenhouse gas emissions beyond the existing CO2 Commitment is complex and can't be solved by targeting the car manufacturers alone. Other interests, like employment and economic growth, are also at stake. This was fully recognised by the High-level Group CARS 21, which aimed to improve the industry's competitiveness in the interest of the whole of Europe.

ACEA urges to take an Integrated Approach to further CO2 reductions as recommended by CARS 21 and recently embraced by Energy Commissioner Andris Piebalgs in the Energy Efficiency Action Plan. Such an integrated or comprehensive approach involves, amongst others: adjusting infrastructure, increasing availability of alternative fuels, influencing driver behaviour and continuing research and development of vehicle technologies. Essential in an Integrated Approach is a harmonised and firmly CO2-related taxation of cars and alternative fuels to support demand for fuel-efficient solutions.

The car industry expects a constructive policy from EU governments and the European Commission and is fully prepared to play its part.

Ivan Hodac, secretary-general of ACEA, is available for comments. Contact Sigrid de Vries, director communications, on +32 485 886 647 or by e-mail: sv@acea.be. The CO2 Commitment can be found on www.acea.be. ACEA represents the 13 major car manufacturers in Europe. They provide employment to 2 million Europeans and support the jobs of another 10 million workers in the EU.