

Press Release
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Secretary General of the International Transport Forum calls for Low-Carbon Transport System

The world's largest transport summit released its findings, a set of Key Messages, in Leipzig on Friday at the conclusion of the three day International Transport Forum.

Leipzig, 30 May 2008. ITF President and Finnish Minister of Transport, Anu Vehviläinen, presented the Key Messages of the three-day International Transport Forum on "Transport and Energy: the Challenge of Climate Change" in Leipzig on Friday. ITF President Mrs. Vehviläinen said, "There was a productive and vivid exchange among the different Forum Members". While there were different assumptions and preconditions in some countries, in many regards, interests were converging and similarities were revealed".

Secretary General Jack Short highlighted the growing challenge to find the right balance between supporting the economic drivers of trade and mobility and reducing transport's energy intensity and emissions. Regarding the sector's overwhelming dependence on oil (95% of transport's energy is based on oil) the worldwide growth of transport and the necessity to mitigate greenhouse gas emissions of the transport sector, Short called for a low-carbon transport system "as soon as possible".

The Key Messages of the International Transport Forum call for a strategic approach to meeting the energy and climate change challenge, based on a package of policy measures. This includes technology development, strengthened research into new technology and fuels, increased use of information technology and integrated mobility management as well as a wide variety of non-technology policy tools with potential to improve economic efficiency and reduce emissions.

These latter measures should encourage behaviour change and include improved organization and telematics to optimize the modes, more effective use of rail, inland waterway and short sea shipping for freight transport, enhanced promotion and service quality of public transport and rail, as well as support for non-motorised means of travel such as walking and cycling, especially in cities, measures to manage traffic demand and reduce congestion as well as pricing mechanisms to encourage behavioural change and ensure that externalities are taken into account.

Transport must “urgently” address the long-term supply of energy. In the shorter term, opportunities should be seized to promote the significant fuel-efficiency improvements to existing technology, attained through combinations of instruments such as regulations, economic and fiscal incentives and information campaigns designed to encourage consumers to opt for the most fuel efficient technologies. As one example, training in ecodriving and equipment of vehicles with feedback instrumentation to support fuel-efficient driving has been shown to be a “promising way forward”. “Transport policy must give incentives for more energy-efficient behaviour”, stressed the ITF Secretary General.

Also biofuels can play a useful role in reducing CO₂ emissions. But production of biofuels must be pursued in an environmentally, economically and socially sustainable way.

In the future, transport ministers want to intensify exchange with scientists and, particularly, other social interest groups. “At the Forum we have initiated an important dialogue which we want to continue. This will allow us to find ways to reduce transport and traffic’s dependence on oil and reduce climate damaging emissions”, Vehviläinen said.

At the 2008 International Transport Forum were representatives from 53 countries, amongst them for the first time a delegation from India. Almost 900 participants as well as more than 100 journalists from 12 countries followed the three-day conference with high-ranking keynote speakers, workshops, panels, an exhibition, and the Open Forum.

“Transport and Globalization” will be the theme of the next International Transport Forum, 27 to 29 May 2009 in Leipzig.

Michael Zirpel
Head of Communications ITF
Tel. +(33-1) 45 24 95 96
email: michael.zirpel@oecd.org