

Press Release

Paris, Istanbul, 1 April 2009

Call for More International Cooperation

International Transport Forum in preparation of the Transport Summit of the Year

“Protectionist measures need to be avoided and international cooperation needs to be strengthened in the present global downturn”, emphasised the Secretary General of the International Transport Forum (ITF) Jack Short at a meeting of the Transport Management Board (TMB) of the ITF in Istanbul on Wednesday. “Transport should play a key role in the present stimulus packages. Investment schemes should facilitate the recovery process and look to the future in a sustainable way”, Mr. Short explained. At their two-day-meeting in the Turkish metropolis representatives of the Ministries of Transport of the 52 Member Countries of the ITF discussed the outline of the upcoming Transport Summit of the Year, the International Transport Forum, which will be held in Leipzig from 26-29 May 2009 under the theme “Transport for a Global Economy: Challenges and Opportunities in the Present Downturn”. This year the Forum will be held under Turkish presidency, and the TMB met on invitation of the Turkish Minister of Transport Binali Yıldırım in Istanbul.

According to the Secretary General of the ITF, there is a risk in the present crisis that countries “turn inwards” through trade restrictions or other forms of protectionism. “But protectionist and purely national responses risk in the medium-term accentuating economic problems and increasing unemployment.” For this reason, solutions need to be found on an international level, adding even more relevance to the theme of the 2009 Forum. Decision makers from politics and industry, key figures from research and civil society will come together at the Forum in Leipzig in May to find ways forward and upwards. With representatives of the 52 Member Countries of the Forum this is “truly a global and unique platform, the right place for international coordination and cooperation”, Mr. Short stressed.

One example where international cooperation can be strengthened is border crossings. The present lack of coordination and bureaucracy add large additional costs to the transport sector. Reducing transport costs by just 1% would lead to annual gains of 40 billion US-Dollars worldwide. Measures to overcome existing obstacles were identified by international experts recently in Paris. The recommendations include amongst others a new cooperative vision for border crossings, strengthening of interagency cooperation and the involvement of the business sector from the beginning of the process. This is one of the important issues to be discussed at the Forum in Leipzig.

Jack Short expressed his respect and thanks to the Turkish hosts of the meeting. “The perfect organisation fosters interesting and fruitful discussions.”

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