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Climate Change: Cancún Agreements Will Not Increase Pressure on Transport to Reduce Emissions

Framework for carbon pricing further away than before Copenhagen and Cancún

Jack Short, Secretary General of the International Transport Forum, the transport think tank at the OECD in Paris, believes that the agreement reached in Cancún will not increase pressure on the transport sector to reduce its CO₂ emissions.

Transport is responsible for 23% of global CO₂ emissions from fossil fuel combustion.

“The Cancun Agreements decided at COP 16 may have given new impetus to a stalled UN negotiating process but will have no direct impact on continued global growth of transport CO₂ emissions”, commented Short.

“Despite conciliatory moves in the final hours of the conference, it now seems less likely that countries will be able to agree an extension of the Kyoto Protocol or an alternative, wider-ranging international treaty on Greenhouse Gas emissions reductions by 2012.”

“This means that political pressure to reduce emissions in the transport sector will probably not increase over the next few years. In some cases it may indeed wane. In practice, carbon constraints will likely not become a defining factor for transport policy for several more years.”

“Crucially, lack of progress in Cancún and the postponement of emission trading schemes in the USA and Australia means we are moving away from setting an international framework for pricing carbon. For international shipping and aviation that are contemplating global market-based measures, this will translate into an increase in the cost of decarbonisation.”

“Finally,” notes Short “current emission trajectories and the uncertain prospect for real emission reduction efforts after the Kyoto Treaty expires also highlight the heightened risk to transport infrastructure and networks from climate disruption.”

On lessons for transport that can be drawn from Cancún, Short said:

“The first lesson is that countries should re-center their efforts on carbon reduction policies that have value for society beyond CO₂ mitigation alone. This means focusing on policies that deliver strong co-benefits such as congestion reduction, enhanced energy security, pollutant reduction and fuel cost savings.”

“The second lesson is that prospects for significantly reducing emissions and avoiding disruptive climate change have not improved - transport must now ready itself to adapt itself to a changing climate.”

For further information please contact **Michael Kloth**, Head of Communications, michael.kloth@oecd.org or +33 1 45 24 95 96. New transport emissions data compiled by the International Transport Forum can be found at www.internationaltransportforum.org/statistics/CO2/index.html.

The International Transport Forum is a strategic think tank for the transport sector. Each year, it brings together Ministers from over 50 countries, along with leading decision-makers and actors from the private sector, civil society and research, to address transport issues of strategic importance. An intergovernmental organisation linked to the OECD, the Forum's goal is to help shape the transport policy agenda, and ensure that it contributes to economic growth, environmental protection, social inclusion and the preservation of human life and wellbeing. The 2011 International Transport Forum, to be held on 25-27 May in Leipzig, Germany, will focus on Transport for Society.