

Paris / France, 19th of September 2008

Consumers, workers, road casualties and environmentalists ask for an ambitious regulation on cars CO₂ which would not only create an economic and industrial dynamic in the car industry, but also reduce CO₂ emissions, household fuel bills and road risks.

Climate urgency is now globally acknowledged as a critical matter. This issue is high on Nicolas Sarkozy's agenda, both as President of France and as head of the EU Presidency, which France will assume on 1st July. The battle against climate change has become the centre of attention and a powerful communication tool. Newspapers are saturated with massive advertising campaigns by car manufacturers, who often over use ecological arguments to make us believe that climate is at the heart of their industrial strategies. The truth is that neither car advertising nor the few efforts industry claims to have made can save the climate. The global car fleet is growing rapidly. Passenger cars already account for 12% of greenhouse gas emissions in Europe, and 14% in France. The adoption of a regulation allowing a massive reduction of CO₂ emissions from vehicles is becoming a key issue at stake in the fight against climate change.

The will to legislate is not new. As early as 1995, the EU had announced a 50 % reduction target for average car emissions within 10 years. Under extreme pressure from the industry, the EU retreated and accepted a voluntary agreement proposed by the European car manufacturers, which committed them to a reduction target for new vehicles of 140g CO₂/km driven by 2008. But the car industry patently failed to meet its commitments. In 2006, vehicles on average still emitted 160g CO₂/km and reached only half of the target. Regardless of their promises, manufacturers continued to develop and sell faster and more powerful cars, which are also heavier and more gas-guzzling.

The EU therefore decided to take control of the issue. A European regulation on CO₂ emissions from passenger vehicles is currently being negotiated, and will likely be adopted under the French Presidency. Despite their failure, European car manufacturers are still strongly lobbying the EU Council, Commission and Parliament to avoid compulsory legislation. The lobby is led by German Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose main concerns are with the financial interests of the German car industry, by far the most polluting in Europe.

The tragic consequences of climate change are apparent and urgent action needs to be taken. Fuel efficiency is by far the main potential source for reducing greenhouse gas emissions from cars. Because there is no more time to waste, we urge the European Union to adopt a regulation that includes an objective of 120g CO₂/km by 2012 and penalties severe enough to ensure all manufacturers comply. We also ask for an ambitious and binding longer-term target to cut CO₂ emissions by 2020.

The signatories below contest each and every argument used by carmakers.

"Technically impossible!" We say that technological solutions do exist and allow such efficiency gains. Some suppliers are ready. Mass production of these new technologies would also guarantee a significant drop in their cost. With low-emission cars now being offered bonuses, clean technologies are not only available but also affordable.

"Consumers are not ready!" It is increasingly difficult for households to meet fuel expenses, or even almost impossible for some of them. More efficient engines also mean less gas-guzzling engines! Consumer demand for more efficient vehicles is nothing new. However, economic difficulties arising from soaring oil prices and declining purchasing power have made it urgent. Consumers have managed to obtain comfortable and secure cars. Now they want respect for the environment.

“Heavier cars are safer!” Statistics show that, on the contrary, an increase in vehicle weight and power leads to a rise in the number and severity of accidents. What is more, an increasing number of insurance companies now offer policies that give preferential treatment to less-polluting cars that also reduce air pollution.

“You are jeopardizing the French industry!” We are surprised to see that all manufacturers are opposed to a farsighted EU regulation. While they have shown some improvement over the last few years, taking such a stand amounts to putting their relatively good performance in line with the most polluting and least responsible carmakers. We consider that the more responsible groups can achieve a competitive advantage by supporting ambitious and compulsory standards, and that their vehicles should automatically benefit from a cleaner car market. Solidarity between carmakers cannot be justified. Today, Europe is the economic leader in the world. So its legislation should be considered as a global standard to which all economic players necessarily and rapidly adapt.

“The European legislation threatens millions of jobs!” This is a massive argument, all the more as Europe is faced with social difficulties. Here again, we do not agree with the analysis. Over the last few years, the automobile sector has undergone industrial restructuring, and sometimes relocations, that do not result from environmental constraints. Stringent legislation would in fact strengthen the European industry’s capacity to innovate, positioning it at the vanguard of global technological innovation, thus forcing non-Europeans manufacturers, especially in Asia, to follow suit. Changes are inevitable and if we wait any longer, these competitors could rapidly take a leading position. European trade unions are aware that the necessary changes in production processes to meet the climate challenge will lead to job adaptations. The European Trade-Union Confederation (ETUC) believes that stabilizing transport emissions by 2030 could increase employment by 20%, especially through the development of cleaner transport modes, such as rail transport or public transport. The responsibilities of States and economic and social players regarding this matter lie in anticipating and facilitating investments in research, employment and training to face technological challenges. This requires a high level of dialogue and early social negotiations. Among other things, big companies have to take their responsibility towards suppliers. We denounce the lack of such a reflection in the framework of the European regulation on vehicle emissions, as it weakens the social acceptability of necessary reforms, and provides carmakers with fallacious arguments.

The signatories to this statement represent a wide range of interests – consumers, workers, road casualties, environmentalists. Together, we intend to defend an ambitious reform in the car industry for the benefit of present and future generations. We urge European decision makers to defend ambitious and legally-binding targets to combat climate change in a key European industrial sector. We also call on car manufacturers to stop hindering a regulation that would not only create an economic and industrial dynamic in the car industry, but also reduce CO₂ emissions, household fuel bills and road risks. We ask car manufacturers to take their share of the responsibility beyond advertising campaigns, and to participate in the collective efforts that must be made if we are to meet the most serious global challenge humanity faces.

Pascal Husting – Executive director of **Greenpeace France**

Alain Bazot – President of **UFC Que choisir** (Consumer association)

Jean Christophe Le Duigou – Secretary of **Confédération générale du travail** (Trade union)

Claude Got – Expert in **Road safety**