

**(AE) EU/TRANSPORT: Hedegaard defends CO2 reduction in TRAN committee**

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Brussels, 10/11/2011 (Agence Europe) - Transport is one of the only sectors in which CO2 emissions continue to climb, a cause for constant concern for members of the parliamentary committee on transport and tourism (TRAN). Committee members have therefore called on Connie Hedegaard, European Commissioner for Climate Action, who set out her ambitions for transport during a hearing on Thursday 10 November. Hedegaard was mainly asked to give clarification regarding the international Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) conspiracy. The ETS is to be applied to aviation in two months' time.

Maritime CO2. Connie Hedegaard said: "Reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transport is an essential part of our climate strategy. Business as usual is not a realistic option. Reduction will be needed by all actors from transport". The Commission is above all examining the maritime sector, and for this reason recently met with European Commissioner Siim Kallas in charge of transport policy (see EUROPE 10491). Unless the International Maritime Organisation raises concrete proposals by the end of the year in order to reach a comprehensive approach to the question, then the EU will work on its own and take initiatives alone to establish reduction targets. Proposals could be made from next year on by the European Commission, after an impact assessment, although a global solution would be preferred, the commissioner said.

Emissions from cars. Another warhorse for Connie Hedegaard is that of continuing to put pressure on the automobile sector in order to reduce vehicles emissions. She is encouraged by the fact that earlier legislation has already proven effective. The commissioner did not fail to point out that the objectives set for the automobile industry for 2015 will already be attained by some producers as of 2012. "CO2 emissions from passenger cars are now decreasing at a higher rate since the introduction of the mandatory CO2 performance standard and the positive trend, I'm glad to say, continues", she said. Heavy goods vehicles should be targeted most of all, as they account for 26% of all road emissions and 5% of total EU emissions, Hedegaard said. Given the fact that, "in the absence of vigorous actions, CO2 emissions will continue to increase even with improved high duty vehicle fuel efficiency", she said it was her intention to prepare a more specific and comprehensive strategy for lorries and buses in 2013.

Frustration regarding ETS. It is mainly the ETS imposed on aviation that brought a passionate response from MEPs, after stock was taken by the commissioner, who minimised costs engendered by the system and repeated that the EU would not go back on its decision but would seek, on the contrary, to rally other countries to its cause. Green MEPs, like Michael Cramer (Germany) and Isabelle Durant (Belgium) said they remained fervent supporters of applying ETS to aviation. Said El Khadraoui (S&D, Belgium) and Christine De Veyrac (EPP, France), for their part, posed the question of negotiations with third partners who do not wish to submit to European legislation, just two months from entry into force. However, the British conservatives spoke vehemently against bringing aviation into the ETS system, at a time when Europe is slumping further into crisis. Jacqueline Foster (ECR, UK) told Hedegaard that she (Hedegaard) "believed her own propaganda". The MEP was indignant about the fiscal nature of the legislation, the tax that could injure the aviation industry, especially the British aviation industry, which is so dear to her.

The commissioner noted comments made by MEPs but also raised the fact that none of them had made any suggestions. She defended the Commission's comprehensive approach aimed at reducing the carbon footprint through the use of renewable energies, and the creation of jobs that cannot be relocated, and advocates releasing Europe of its costly dependence on fossil fuels provided by foreign companies. (MD/transl.jl)

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