Transport policy: proposals and action programme for 2010. White Paper

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The Council, on the basis of the work carried out during the Belgian Presidency, has adopted conclusions in which it shares with the Commission the concern at the current situation of the transport sector. It considers that the Community should ensure that transport policy contributes to the achievement of the objectives of cohesion and convergence, and to the principles of free movement in European Union territory. It reiterates that integration of environmental aspects and progress towards a sustainable transport system can provide new business opportunities, bring social progress, stimulate economic growth and create new jobs without necessarily entailing traffic growth with an increase in the negative effects of transport. The Presidency recognises that it was appropriate to draw up the White Paper, in view of the development of the transport system in the EU and the need to guarantee its activity in the context of the final consolidation of the single market and of balanced and sustainable development. However, it considers that the necessary considerations should be incorporated for its application, in order to take account of the diversity of geographical, regional, economic and social situations in the Member States of the current and the enlarged European Union. The rebalancing of transport modes, as set out in the White Paper, should result in a combination of various measures whose central aim is to promote the most favourable modes of transport from an environmental viewpoint and in terms of economic efficiency. To that end, the Commission is invited to continue improving the knowledge of the relative efficiency of the different transport modes. The Council also considers that the application of the "pooling of funds" analysed in the White Paper as a new and innovative possibility for funding infrastructures still gives rise to serious concerns for some Member States, yet is seen by other Member States as a new and interesting concept to explore, and could be applied by Member States on a voluntary basis whilst respecting the principles of non-discrimination and proportionality; invites therefore the Commission and the Member States to study further this new funding system whilst taking into account the costs already borne by infrastructure users. The Council shares the Commission's objective of improving the safety of transport in general and sets itself the goal of substantially reducing road mortalities by 2010. It emphasises the importance of enhancing safety in tunnels and for vulnerable users, welcomes further efforts by the Commission in the area of transport safety including appropriate progress in social harmonisation and its enforcement in the road transport sector. It invites the Commission to come forward with measures known to have tangible results, notably non-legislative initiatives, in order to reach this ambitious objective. Such measures involve promoting the development and application of new technologies and measures aimed at further improving the safety of the transport of dangerous goods. It also emphasises the important role that Member States and the Community must play, by collaborating in the enforcement of laws affecting important road safety issues, the promotion of better driving behaviour and the implementation of safer road design. The Council concurs with the White Paper regarding the need to continue the legislative processes for the revitalisation ofrailways and subscribes in particular to the objective of further promoting rail freight traffic. It also endorses the series of initiatives regarding the promotion of short-sea shipping and inland navigation. Lastly, the Council underlines the importance of continuing the efforts in the transport sector with a view to contributing to meeting the obligations stemming from the recent ratification of the Kyoto Procotol by the European Community and the Member States and welcomes in this perspective the adoption of the 6th Environmental Action Programme.