Resolution on climate change in the run-up to the Buenos-Aires Conference, November 1998, towards an EU Post-Kyoto Strategy

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OBJECTIVE: within the framework of the Community strategy to reduce CO2 emissions from passenger cars, to present the environmental agreement concluded with the European automobile industry. CONTENT: the European Commission and the ACEA (European Automobile Manufacturers' Association) reached a voluntary agreement with a view to reducing CO2 emissions from passenger cars, thereby avoiding the need for a binding legal framework (which would be presented by the Commission automatically if the agreement was not applied properly). The agreement makes provision for the European automobile industry to undertake to limit CO2 emissions to 140 g/km by 2008 for all new vehicles marketed in the European Union (the Council set a target limit in 1996, based on the general strategy to reduce CO2 emissions, of 120 g/km by 2005 or 2010 at the latest for new vehicles). The limits would apply both to traditional vehicles, innovative designs and cars using replacement fuels or new propulsion systems. The ACEA also undertakes to evaluate the situation in 2003 and, if necessary, to review the targets with a view to achieving additional reductions by the year 2012. It also undertakes to market cars with CO2 emissions of 120g/km or less by the year 2000. An "estimated target range" has been set for 2003 for average emissions from new cars but is purely indicative (165-170 g/km). Reductions in CO2 emissions should be achieved both through technological developments and by changing the market structure (directing demand towards smaller cars which are more efficient in terms of consumption). This change in the market could be induced both by changing consumer attitudes and through new product and marketing policies, tax measures and special "fuel economy" labelling. Additional tax measures (not included in the agreement) could give added value to the agreement. The Commission could emphasise potential effects safeguarded by tax measures in the recommendation on the agreement which it has undertaken to present at a later date. For its part, the ACEA undertakes to achieve its target reductions for CO2 solely through technological progress and its impact on the market. However, implementation of the agreement depends on a certain number of assumptions independent of the ACEA commitment: - the availability of appropriate fuels to implement technologies which allow CO2 reduction targets to be achieved (the agreement is based on the negotiated compromise on the "fuel quality" aspects of the auto-oil programme); - removing distortions to competition which might give American, Japanese and Korean competitors an unfair advantage over European manufacturers as the result of their efforts to reduce CO2; - the absence of obstacles to the marketing of reduced consumption technologies (which does not limit the freedom of the Community and the Member States to take recourse to fiscal or legislative measures); - the general economic climate in the European automobile industry. Finally, the agreement makes provision for the implementation of a system for monitoring CO2 emissions from passenger cars for which the Commission and the ACEA will be jointly responsible.