



Friends of the Earth Europe



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STATEMENT BY ENVIRONMENTAL NGO REPRESENTATIVES TO THE HIGH LEVEL GROUP ON COMPETITIVENESS, ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

**Brussels
28 February 2006**

The civil society organisations which we represent are not part of the formal institutional structures of the European Union (EU). We are however, dedicated to giving input into EU decision-making processes; indeed one of the expectations of our memberships is to ensure decision-makers are held accountable to citizens' concerns. Accordingly, we consider this High Level Group on Competitiveness, Energy and the Environment (HLG) does not replace or interfere over the two years of its operation with the standard decision making procedures in the EU.

We see our function on an advisory committee such as this one as having three distinct roles.

First, we believe our participation will at all times be guided by the principle that the workings of the advisory group will be as open and transparent as possible. The reporting on its activities and deliberations should be of the highest and best standards practicable using modern communications technologies. This is to ensure that EU citizens understand, and, to the extent possible, feel able to engage in the process.

Second, it is our role to bring experience and knowledge of the issues to the work of the HLG and the various working groups. This will be even more essential given the biased nature of the representation on the HLG. This imbalance in the HLG's composition was already highlighted in a letter from us to President Barroso and the four Commissioners on the HLG at the end of January - and for which we still await a reply.

Third, we believe it is the role of civil society participation to ensure that the mandate of the HLG is limited to an advisory role to the relevant institutions. We intend to be vigilant to ensure that any temptation or tendency to overreach the mandate of the group and to enter policy-making or decision-making territory is resisted.

Accordingly, we would like to make the following statements to the first meeting of the HLG.

We regard the presence of 4 Commissioners and 4 Ministers on the HLG indicates that the Commission and Member States see this as an important vehicle for policy advice. The work of the HLG is very political in nature, even if it may look rather technical. It should at all times be made clear to EU citizens what this group is discussing,

what are the different viewpoints that are being brought together and how the group will come to conclusions.

The composition of the HLG is imbalanced and does not reflect the ambitions the Commission had originally announced. The HLG is dominated by large energy users and traditional energy suppliers. Leading companies pioneering products and services in the renewable energy and energy efficiency sectors are absent. Consumer and health organisations are absent. Academia and Research institutions are absent. It is unfortunate that the Council has not delegated even one Environment Minister. We also see SMEs, financial services and public transport sector as missing from the discussions.

We would urge the highest levels of transparency standards for the HLG processes. These should be in line with existing best practices. We cite as examples of best practice the working of the European Climate Change Programme (1) and the Motor Vehicle Emissions Group (2). Lists of participants, presentations, agendas, minutes, interim and final reports and other relevant documentation are available online in the public domain and in real time.

We recommend that the composition of the expert groups is used to restore the balance that is lacking in the HLG itself. We have made concrete suggestions for experts and we urge the Commission to give favourable consideration to our nominations.

In conclusion, we shall strive to make the process a successful one and we will work wherever possible on the principle of consensus. But we cannot commit ourselves beforehand to always agreeing with the process or outcomes. We consider it essential therefore, that alternative opinions are fully included in the reports of the HLG, to the Commission and to the press.

Submitted on behalf of the G10 environmental organisations (3):

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Notes:

1. http://forum.europa.eu.int/Public/irc/env/eccp_2/library
2. http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/automotive/mveg_meetings/index.htm
3. G10 are: BirdLife International; CEE Bankwatch; Climate Action Network Europe; The European Environmental Bureau; European Public Health Alliance – Environment Network; Friends of Earth Europe; Greenpeace European Unit; International Friends of Nature; European Federation for Transport and Environment; WWF European Policy Office.