

Global Automotive Industry Meeting



DETROIT

11 January 2005

Leaders of World's Automakers Address Global Issues

Detroit, Michigan – The leaders of the world's automakers today met in Detroit to discuss the industry's global public policy priorities regarding even cleaner and safer motor vehicles, as well as intellectual property and harmonization of safety regulations.

Representatives of the Alliance of Automobile Manufacturers, European Automobile Manufacturers Association (ACEA), and Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association (JAMA) also participated. This meeting, the third Global Automotive Industry Meeting, was held in conjunction with the North American International Auto Show. Previously, automotive CEOs discussed global public policy issues at the October 2003 Tokyo Motor Show and at the 2002 Paris Auto Show.

Chaired by G. Richard Wagoner, Jr., Chairman & CEO of General Motors Corporation, today's gathering of international auto executives addressed the progress made since the first global meeting, as well as other issues for future attention. Attendees agreed that automakers need to continue to promote progress in providing even cleaner and safer automobiles around the globe, while at the same time joining in productive partnerships with governments, consumers and stakeholders to advance important safety, environmental and intellectual property issues. At the meeting, CEOs discussed these public policy topics:

Intellectual Property

To ensure the sound growth and continued vitality of the global automobile industry, as well as for the sake of the economic development of all nations, respect for intellectual property is critical in industrialized and developing countries alike. Respect for intellectual property encourages much needed industrial development while also upholding the interests of consumers. Respect for intellectual property also accelerates the transfer of advanced technology and the direct investment necessary to support progress in developing countries. Intellectual property infringements have now reached a scale that cannot possibly be ignored. The circulation of counterfeit replacement parts, motorcycles and motor vehicles lacking the quality and performance of original products threatens both consumer safety and environmental protection. Automakers agree that the governments of all countries should work cooperatively to establish and enforce intellectual property laws, while steadfastly opposing the proliferation of counterfeit products.

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Advanced Technology and Improved Fuel Quality

Automakers are working on multiple pathways to produce cleaner, more fuel-efficient advanced technology vehicles, including hybrid-electric, clean diesel, hydrogen-fueled internal combustion engines and fuel cell-powered vehicles. Consumer incentives from government can help spur sales of these vehicles. These incentives should be technology neutral. Consumers and the marketplace should choose which technologies make sense for them, and the government should not pick winners and losers. In addition to market incentives, much remains to be done to develop the infrastructure to support advanced technology vehicles.

Today’s ultra-clean vehicles need clean fuels with consistent quality. The World-Wide Fuel Charter provides a guide to understanding the fuel quality needs of the industry, as well as a road map toward global harmonization of fuel quality. Automakers strongly endorse the removal of lead from the world’s gasoline supply. Capping sulfur at 10 parts-per-million in both gasoline and diesel fuel will enable more fuel-efficient technologies.

Sustainable Mobility and Road Traffic Safety

Sustainable mobility focuses on moving people and goods in an affordable and safe manner, while meeting economic, environmental and social goals. To advance sustainable mobility, there is a need for a coordinated effort among automakers, public authorities and other stakeholders.

Motor vehicle safety is among the highest priorities of automakers around the globe, and automakers are vigorously pursuing safety advancements, collectively and individually. Auto safety has improved significantly due to a mix of regulation, consumer education and voluntary initiatives by automakers. Future progress will occur at a rapid pace in response to market demands. Still, road safety remains a challenge, requiring an integrated approach with the involvement of many stakeholders. Automakers play an important role in vehicle design and performance. The industry sees opportunities to partner with the World Health Organization, the Global Road Safety Partnership and other important stakeholders, including those responsible for designing and building safe roadways, the governments responsible for developing and enforcing safety laws, the emergency response community, and finally the driving public.

At the meeting, brief reports were provided on these topics:

Progress in Clean Diesel Technology

Technological advances have resulted in clean diesel automobiles. Clean diesel offers greater fuel economy while delivering the performance and durability that consumers demand. The automobile industry needs to continue to publicize the many consumer benefits of clean diesel, while continuing to urge the oil industry to enhance the availability of high quality clean diesel fuels.

International Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations

Harmonization of technical regulations under the United Nations (U.N.) 1958 and 1998 Agreements will improve automobile safety, preserve the environment and reduce consumer costs, which are all important elements regarding sustainable mobility. In 2004, an important achievement occurred when a new global regulation was finalized for door latches, hinges and locks. This regulation represents the first global technical regulation developed under the 1998 Global Agreement to come from the World Forum for Harmonization of Vehicle Regulations, a technical working group sponsored by the U.N. that has already developed more than 100 regulations under the U.N. 1958 Agreement. The success of the U.N. working group shows that international challenges can be surmounted, producing better safety guidelines for all motorists around the globe. Formulation of a Global Technical Regulation on pedestrian protection under the Global Agreement is a potential next step. The auto industry looks forward to working with governments to prioritize other possible areas with high safety value.

Next Meeting

An invitation was extended by Dr. Pischetsrieder (Volkswagen), on behalf of ACEA, to host the fourth Global Automotive Industry Meeting in Europe in March 2006, and the participants agreed to establish jointly supported working groups to assist in future meetings.

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