

UK: FISITA gives conditional welcome to '50 By 50' GFEI initiative

By: Toby Procter, 09/03/2009, AutomotiveWorld.com

FISITA, the International Federation of Automotive Engineering Societies, has welcomed the '50 By 50' Global Fuel Economy Initiative (GFEI) launched by UNEP and other international agencies at the 2009 Geneva motor show, but, echoing the stance of the ACEA on CO2 emissions reduction, warns that it will only be achieved through a shared commitment and sustained investment on the part of governments, drivers and energy producers, as well as the automotive industry.

The GFEI calls for a 50% improvement in fuel economy worldwide by 2050, which the sponsoring agencies argue can be achieved largely through incremental change to conventional drive systems, along with weight reduction and better aerodynamics.

FISITA, representing national automotive societies in 38 countries, believes it will be extremely challenging in the current economic and regulatory climate for engineers to achieve such a dramatic cut through the optimisation of established vehicle and powertrain technologies alone, particularly in the context of average vehicle weight having increased by 16% in the past decade, mostly due to enhanced mandatory safety features.

In July this year, FISITA will host a World Automotive Summit in Germany, which will bring together automotive leaders along with experts from governments, academia and associations to identify shared priorities and work towards greater cooperation in the fight against automotive CO2.

Meanwhile, FISITA is calling for the following action:

- Urgent, targeted economic support for the automotive industry to protect pre-competitive R&D into green technologies, and fiscal incentives to encourage drivers of older, more polluting vehicles to replace them with the latest, low-emission alternatives
- A clear regulatory framework that focuses on achieving the greatest real-world reductions in CO2 emissions generated by a vehicle's use throughout its lifespan, rather than one based solely on potential CO2 created in laboratory conditions
- International harmonisation of standards for key technologies including alternative fuels and electric drive technologies
- Major investment in power generation from renewable energy sources, including funding of long-range scientific research into solar energy. Electric vehicles can play a major part in achieving the 50 By 50 target, believes FISITA.