



**Public Debate**  
**Tar sands - undermining EU climate ambitions?**

**5th May 2010 / 09.30-12:30 / European Parliament / Room: P4B001 (Paul-Henri Spaak)**

Debate will present the environmental, climate and social impacts of tar sands and discuss relevant EU policy proposals in the context of EU Climate Agenda (Fuel Quality Directive - FQD), Europe 2020 Strategy, relations with Canada as well as address the issue of EU energy security in the tar sands context.

The EU is currently discussing GHG methodology for fossil fuels, which represents an opportunity to accurately account and improve emissions from fossil fuels. This so called Fuel Quality Directive would also provide rules for reporting and monitoring of carbon intensity of crude oil imports and could bring in specific values for heavy crude oil, such as tar sands. Canada warned EU that promoting greener fuels will harm the market for its oil sands. While the imports of tar sands based oil to the EU market may be small at the moment, this might change in the near future as the European oil companies are already significantly increasing their tar sands portfolios through investments in Congo, Jordan, Madagascar, Nigeria, Russia and other countries.

Tar sands – a naturally occurring mixture of sand or clay, water and an extremely dense and viscous form of petroleum called bitumen – cause more damage to the climate than conventional oil. The greenhouse gas emissions of converting tar sands into fuel is three to five times higher than for conventional oil. The pollution, deforestation and wildlife disturbance associated with tar sands developments also threaten the traditional livelihoods and wellbeing of indigenous communities.

Europe 2020 Strategy was launched in March 2010 laying out the Commission's vision for overcoming Europe's current financial and economic crisis and achieving a "smart, sustainable and inclusive economy". The Strategy is premised on "drastic action" to counter the interlinked threats of climate change, growing world population and dwindling natural resources. It recognizes that sustainable growth in Europe can only be achieved by "decarbonising our economy, increasing the use of renewable sources, modernising our energy efficiency".

From Europe 2020 Strategy: "Strong dependence on fossil fuels such as oil and inefficient use of raw materials expose our consumers and businesses to harmful and costly price shocks, threatening our economic security and contributing to climate change."

The EU's first step to realizing a "resource-efficient Europe", according to the Strategy is the implementation of the "20/20/20" targets on climate and energy: cutting GHG emissions by at least 20% compared to 1990 levels (rising to a maximum 30% if other major economies come on board), increasing the share of renewable energy to 20%, and improving energy efficiency by 20% by 2020. FQD is an element of the "20/20/20 climate package, therefore it is crucial that heavy crude oil is properly taken into account in order to prevent increases in emissions through 'back door'.

There is also serious doubt over tar sands' financial viability and impact on energy security. Analysts and investors are now questioning the business case for investment in tar sands. Tar sands will not enhance global or regional energy security. Firstly, and fundamentally, because their carbon cost is unacceptably high. Secondly, because Canadian tar sands production cannot be ramped up easily to fill any supply gap when other sources fail, due to its huge infrastructure needs and lack of spare capacity, and it does not challenge OPEC's strong dominance of the global oil market.

The event will bring together representatives of civil society members from European and developing countries, European Commission, European Parliament, Council, industry, international organisations.



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