NEWS RELEASE

UK discusses next steps in combating drink driving

25 February 2008, London **- 26 distinguished road safety experts gathered today in the Houses of Parliament in London to discuss strategies to reduce alcohol misuse in road transport in the UK. The event was organised by the European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) [(i)] and the Parliamentary Advisory Council for Transport Safety (PACTS) in the framework of ETSC's "Safe & Sober" [(ii)] drink driving programme.**

Drink driving has been on the agenda with little progress for far too long. The consultation proposing policy changes is long overdue stated Louise Ellman, who chaired the discussion. In fact little progress has been made in the last 10 years in reducing the number of drink driving related deaths in the UK. Between 1997 and 2006 this number remained quite constant at around 550 deaths every year. According to ETSC, developments in drink driving deaths have slowed down overall progress in reducing road deaths in the UK.

"This clearly shows the need for lowering the BAC limit from 0.8 g/l to 0.5 g/l as well as the introduction of targeted breath testing. No further time should be wasted in addressing this", said Robert Gifford, Executive Director at PACTS. According to Gifford, the number of roadside screening breath tests in the UK decreased from 815,000 in 1998 to 607,000 in 2005. The upcoming consultation on drink driving would be an ideal window of opportunity to accelerate progress on combating drink driving by setting up a lower BAC limit in conjunction with intensified enforcement actions as agreed by the participants.

Ten years ago the then government proposed both a lower limit and the introduction of random testing in the frame of a consultation. However this did not go ahead due in part to the rural pub lobby. Nevertheless now nearly ten years later the situation has evolved further with the rise of binge drinking and public support from the Scottish Government for changing the limit. Public support is now there. The UK government should take the courageous and necessary step of proposing these changes.

For more information please contact ETSC's Communications Officer Evgueni Pogorelov at evgueni.pogorelov@etsc.be or ETSC's Policy Officer Timmo Janitzek at timmo.janitzek@etsc.be.

Note to Editors:

[i] The European Transport Safety Council (ETSC) is a Brussels-based non-profit making organisation dedicated to the reduction of transport crashes and casualties in Europe. ETSC seeks to identify and promote effective measures on the basis of international scientific research and best practice. It brings together 37 organisations concerned with transport safety from across Europe.

[ii] The objective of the Talk and the "Safe & Sober" campaign is to raise awareness amongst policy makers, the private sector as well as some key opinion leaders for a systematic approach to reduce drink driving, especially in commercial transport. The campaign will identify and promote Best Practice from the health and transport sectors alike. It will include measures relating to education (e.g. effective information campaigns), enforcement (e.g. random breath testing) and engineering (e.g. alcohol interlocks). The "Safe & Sober" campaign is run by ETSC in partnership with VOLVO.