

# Germanwatch Raises Complaint Against Volkswagen

## Climate Damaging Business Strategy Violates OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises

**Bonn, 7 May 2007:** Today, the environmental and development organisation Germanwatch raised a complaint against the Volkswagen Corporation. Germanwatch accuses the company of violating the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises. The guidelines are supposed to contribute to implementing corporate accountability - in the field of environmental protection amongst others -, and they provide multinational enterprises with detailed instructions on how to act. "Volkswagen committed itself to these guidelines and should aim its business strategy at achieving the goal of avoiding dangerous climate change", emphasised Cornelia Heydenreich, Senior Advisor for Corporate Accountability at Germanwatch. Facing climate change, the resource intensive transport sector is particularly responsible for developing and implementing strategies to achieve climate protection goals. "But VW violates the guidelines and self-committed obligations in multiple cases", according to Cornelia Heydenreich.

Mainly due to the climate damaging product range and business strategy, Germanwatch accuses VW of violating the guidelines in 15 concrete cases. During the last 15 years, the company has massively extended those luxury and medium-class car types which are particularly harmful to the climate. Additionally, VW has mainly focussed its marketing strategy on these vehicles. The company has also lobbied aggressively against climate protection frameworks and consistently published wrong information. Besides, according to a survey of "Transport and Environment", from all large German automotive companies, VW is the farthest away from complying with the self-commitment (ACEA Agreement) the company agreed on with the European Commission in 1998. Particularly the brands VW and Audi have only achieved little progress in reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions per kilometre.

Volkswagen is not the only automotive company in charge. Nevertheless, due to the above reasons amongst others, Germanwatch selected VW exemplarily; further OECD complaints against Daimler-Chrysler and BMW are currently examined. Germanwatch worked out the complaint with legal advice of Roda Verheyen from the lawyer's office Günther, Heidel, Wollenteit und Hack in Hamburg [1], and submitted it to the National OECD Contact Point in the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology. Heydenreich commented: "We expect the National Contact Point to institute transparent and fair proceedings. VW must lay it on the line and try to reconcile its business practices with the guidelines. If the company is not able or does not want to achieve this goal, the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology must execute an appropriate public declaration."

Christoph Bals, Executive Director at Germanwatch, added: "We have been pressing VW for several years to develop a one-litre-car. Volkswagen has achieved to implement this demand in a tragicomical way. Actually, the Bugatti Veyron consumes at full speed one litre not per hundred kilometre, but per kilometre." Bals made clear: "Today, the Sessions of the Subsidiary Bodies of the UNFCCC start, and governments are struggling to develop a concept for avoiding dangerous climate change. It is unacceptable if business strategies and product ranges of some enterprises undermine this declared goal of the world community."

[1] We are also grateful for legal advice by several members of the [Climate Justice Networks \(CJN\)](#)

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