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Rapid agreement on recovery plan essential to revitalise flagging EU economies

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'It is imperative that EU heads of state pass the European Commission's recovery plan at the spring summit this week. The plan must prioritise the technologies of tomorrow and ensure a green recovery, otherwise the stimulus will fail', warned Christian Kjaer, EWEA Chief Executive at the European Wind Energy Conference (EWEC) in Marseille today. The €65 million that the plan dedicates to finance offshore wind will create jobs, provide new R&D opportunities to make the power sector more efficient and less expensive, improve operations and maintenance, and speed up market deployment.

The proposed EU economic recovery plan currently sets aside €3,900 billion for energy projects including over €890million for key strategic interconnections in the power grid. The €65 million for offshore wind includes the initiation of the first stage of a North Sea offshore grid. These measures will help unlock the largest European indigenous energy resource and stimulate Europe's lagging economies.

US President Barack Obama's \$787 billion (€608 bn) economic stimulus plan offers \$7 billion in loan guarantees for renewable energy projects, \$13 billion to tax credits for renewable energy production and is putting \$11 billion into modernising the power grid. \$1.25 billion is being earmarked for research and development in renewables and \$500 million is going to workforce training for renewable and energy efficiency careers. The Member States would do well to be proportionally ambitious if they want to ensure their economies get a real stimulus and retain and consolidate their global technological leadership in renewable energies. Governments need to offer loan guarantees to wind energy and other renewables projects, prioritising the technologies of tomorrow, otherwise their stimulus will fail.

Indeed, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) recently recommended that one third of the around \$2.5 trillion-worth of planned stimulus packages worldwide should be used to 'green' the world economy, as this would help "power the global economy out of recession". The national recovery plans of the European countries do not even come close.

The EU recovery plan is now due to be discussed by EU heads of state at the spring summit on 19-20 March. The plan will then be approved by the European Parliament.

For more information on EWEC, go to www.ewec2009.info.

Note to editors:

- EWEA is the voice of the wind industry, actively promoting the utilisation of wind power in Europe and worldwide. It now has over 550 members from 50 countries, including manufacturers with a 90% share of the world wind power market, plus component suppliers, research institutes, national wind and renewables associations, developers, electricity providers, finance and insurance companies and consultants. This combined strength makes EWEA the world's largest and most powerful wind energy network.