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**"Renewable energy: European Union continues to work towards ambitious target"**

*Check Against Delivery  
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi  
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

Global Wind Energy Council

**Brussels, 9 March 2005**

Mister President,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to thank for invitation to take part in the launching of the Global Wind Energy Council. Today's gathering confirms the truly global nature of the wind energy and energy related challenges in general.

I see this initiative as an additional sign of the maturity that the wind industry is starting to reach. It also reinforces commercial relations with other major energy consuming countries like the United States of America, China and India in a sector where the European industry is a world leader.

Europe has a leading role in promoting sustainable development and the promotion of forward-looking energy policies is a key factor for success in this respect. Among the main priorities that the European Union's energy policy has to address are its growing dependence on energy imports and the challenge of climate change whilst at the same time pursuing the Lisbon agenda. Renewable energy is one of the most important ways to bring to Europe not only environmental benefits, but also other important advantages such as (i) improved security of supply due to reduced need for imported hydrocarbons, (ii) increased employment and (iii) technological development.

Therefore, as a European Commissioner for Energy I am fully committed to ensure that the Union continues to work towards the ambitious target of 12% share of renewable energy by 2010. The support for all forms of renewable energy, including wind, is an essential element in bringing these new technologies to market, increasing their competitiveness and thus their market share.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

European legislation on renewable electricity represented a historical step in the development of wind energy. The setting of quantified national targets and the establishment of appropriate support schemes have been crucial for the development of this energy.

Europe is currently the world leader in wind energy. At the end of 2004 the Union's cumulative wind capacity was 34,205 MW and, over the past six years, the average annual growth rate in the European Union was of 20%. Wind power in Europe is already today saving 50 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> a year. Wind turbine manufacturing turnover represents 5.7 billion Euros.

In 2004 Europe continued to dominate the global market, accounting for 72,4% of new wind installations. Asia accounted for 15,9%, followed by North America with 6,4% and the Pacific Region with 4,1%.

The situation in Europe differs from one Member-State to another. Germany, Spain and Denmark represent more than 80% of installed wind power capacity in Europe. These successes have been the result of implementing an attractive support system together with the removal of administrative and grid barriers.

At the same time, there still are obstacles to be removed so that European wind energy could continue to expand.

The further rapid progress that industry and promoters are capable of delivering is constrained by grid access possibilities and administrative barriers. It is clear that poor integration of renewable electricity in the regional or local planning and opaque grid-connection procedures can block the take-off of renewable energies.

The Commission's Communication on the financing of renewable energy sources to be published by the end of this year will include an evaluation of the different support schemes implemented around Europe. We shall identify current best practice, as well as assess the corresponding support necessary to continue stable growth. Even though we operate within the rules of the internal market and a strong support to renewable energy sources is needed, I believe that it is premature to propose a harmonised European support scheme. I am also willing to discuss this issue in the framework of the envisaged Forum for sustainable energy to be set up this year.

An off-shore wind policy for the EU needs to strengthen the necessary grid adaptation and optimization. Our Trans-European Energy Networks Policy has to devote also particular attention in this area.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to stress the important role of European industry in the successful development of renewable energy.

Cooperation with a young and expanding industry fits perfectly to the European strategic goal of becoming a competitive economy capable of sustainable growth.

Due to a joint effort by European industry, Member States and European Institutions, wind energy has been showing progress through a rapid reduction in cost with a very prominent learning curve. I would like to stress that the socio-economical aspect of wind development goes together with its environmental advantages and wind energy represents more than 70.000 jobs created in Europe. The European Commission has been supporting wind power demonstration projects since 1983 when the technology was right at the start of its development. Most successfully commercialised wind turbines have received support from Community programmes, either in the research or in the demonstration phase. The same is true of the first offshore installations.

Although there remain big unexploited wind resources onshore, the offshore potential is still greater. All current offshore projects up and running are in Europe. The Commission is currently supporting different projects on the Coast of Scotland and in the Baltic Sea.

Innovative solutions and new technologies have been developed under the different European framework programmes of Research and Technology Development. Two areas of support must be mentioned: larger machines and emerging markets like off-shore. The European Union also cooperates with the industry in the program devoted to the removal of non-technological barriers. The ALTENER programme which is now part of Intelligent Energy for Europe has been pushing for a growing wind market.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Global Wind Energy Council will contribute to the international dimension of wind energy and to the consolidation of the industry. I would like to confirm our commitment to the development of renewable energy sources recognising the crucial role of wind energy in the renewable electricity sector. We offer our European experience and our commitment for climate change and renewable energies. We are interested to share experiences and to look for common solutions with you.

I wish you every success in your future activities.

Thank you.