

**Address by Geert van Maanen, Secretary General of the  
Ministry of Transport and Public Works, at the EU Energy in  
Motion Conference in Amsterdam on 19 October 2004 at 1.00  
p.m.**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very honoured to open the European Conference on Energy in Motion. Minister Karla Peijs regrets that she is not able to be here today.

I am very pleased to see such a large number of representatives of the private sector, the research world, social organisations and government agencies in the 25 EU Member States. And I would like to give an especially warm welcome to the representatives of the new Member States.

It is extremely important that we are here at this conference, with such a broad audience. For in the next two days, we will be discussing some vital issues: the environment, transport and energy. These subjects are a focus of European and global interest, and give rise to specific concerns for many of today's citizens.

What will happen to petrol prices if oil prices keep on rising? Will I still be able to afford to get from A to B by car? What will any new fuels mean for my new car? What will the new technologies cost me, and are they really as safe, reliable and convenient as my familiar petrol or diesel car? If traffic keeps on growing, will my children still be able to breathe clean air? We will be talking about the answers to questions of this kind over the next two days. If we really want to make Europe a *Citizens' Europe*, then we have to get to work on some concrete decisions.

This is why the Netherlands, as the current president of the EU, felt it was so important to organise this conference. We have to do something to secure our energy supplies in the future. That's made even clearer by the continually rising oil prices and the international conflicts we see on television every day. Even though opinions are divided over how much oil and gas we still have available, we have to think about alternatives now, before it is too late.

We also urgently need to do something about the effects of climate change on our environment. We spend billions of euros on protection against flooding rivers and rising sea levels, especially in the Netherlands, where three quarters of the land

lies below sea level. If we do nothing, emissions of greenhouse gases from traffic will continue to rise.

We must also address the issue of air quality in urban areas. Far too many people in Europe suffer traffic problems every day. We are already forced to impose all sorts of restrictions on traffic in order to keep the negative effects on local residents within bounds. And we can no longer build housing at attractive urban locations, because of the presence of roads or airports.

Finally, we have to invest in sustainable markets in order to achieve the Lisbon targets: a European economy that is clean, clever and competitive, that can compete on a global scale and that can create more prosperity in Europe in a sustainable way!

This means that in Europe, we have to innovate! Innovation is the engine of a competitive European economy. Through smarter production, you can bring down the traditional wall between economic growth and environmental requirements. Europe could also take the lead in this way, by stimulating or demanding innovative technology.

You and I know that all sorts of things are being done. Alternative means of transport and fuel-saving cars are already

available. Some of you were fetched from the airport or the station in the latest models. Tomorrow, you will all have a chance to see and test the different manufacturers' prototypes and the vehicles that have already reached the roadworthy phase.

We have already seen many positive initiatives during the preparations for this conference: government agencies and companies that are working on concrete solutions. But the problems are complex. We cannot get there alone. Different parties need each other. And who will then take the initiative?

European governments have a clear role to play here as drivers of the market. Even if the market must ultimately do what is needed, the government must create a climate that stimulates innovation and European co-operation. Consumers are willing. I'm convinced of that. As long as their freedom of movement and its affordability are not threatened. That is the challenge that we now face: that of reliable, affordable and sustainable mobility.

In the coming days, there will be every opportunity to exchange ideas in an informal setting, in order to discuss that challenge. And I particularly want to emphasise the informal nature of this

meeting. Feel free to ask questions and make critical comments. We don't just want to hear smooth stories. Above all, we want to be realistic and make the challenges concrete. And for that, a number of things will have to happen.

We have to reach agreement on the degree of urgency. We need a sense of the commitment that different parties are willing to make. Who is prepared to play which role?

We need to talk about political, economic and social choices in Europe in the field of energy, mobility and the environment, and about the social consequences of those choices for citizens and for businesses.

We have to take the step from vision to implementation, from thinking to doing. Europe must become the leader in clean and cost-efficient transport, with healthy, competitive industries and less dependence on imported fossil fuels. Naturally, that choice has consequences, which is something we also need to have a serious discussion about.

These are critical questions, which call for critical answers! I am confident that in the next two days, we can make a flying start on finding the right answers.

Mr. Simon Upton, Chairman of the OECD's Round Table on Sustainable Development, kindly agreed to act as the chairman for this meeting. I would now like to hand the floor to him. I wish you all a very interesting conference and hope that you are willing to be part of the solution rather than part of the problem!

Thank you.