

11th World Congress on ITS
Opening Ceremony Speech
Nagoya, 18 October 2004

By

H.E. Mr. Bernhard Zepter
Ambassador and Head of Delegation of the European Commission in Japan

Your Imperial Highnesses,
Governor, Mayor, Dr. Toyoda,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to be here in Nagoya and to participate in this Congress on behalf of the European Commission.

It would be difficult to think of a location better suited for the ITS World Congress than Nagoya. This city is not only with a rich history and business tradition, but is also thriving to be the leader in the application of Intelligent Transport Systems in Japan and world-wide.

For the first time, the Congress is also open to the public at large. This will certainly bring the benefits of ITS to all the different levels of society.

The impact of EU enlargement on transport and mobility throughout the Union is huge. Our estimates show that the traffic between our Member States will double by 2020. Sustaining economic growth will need major investments in the Trans-European Transport Networks.

This is why the Commission proposed in July this year more than 20 billion euro in funding over the next seven years for the trans-European transport and energy networks. Our proposal represents a significant increase in the budget.

In building our Information Society, we are also investing in other infrastructures. Galileo, the European satellite navigation system, will be operational in 2008. We are currently in the final stage of selecting the Concession Company that will build and operate Galileo. We are convinced that Galileo will open new applications in all transport sectors as well as enhancing existing ones.

The main themes of this World Congress are Safety, Sustainability and Accessibility. These objectives are also the cornerstones of the European Transport Policy, as manifested by the White Paper on European Transport Policy towards 2010 that we adopted in 2001.

Concerning road safety, we have set ourselves the ambitious target of halving the number of fatalities by 2010. Translated to the figures in the current Union of 25 Member States this means less than 25.000 fatalities by 2010.

In the EU of 15, progress has been positive and led to a substantial reduction in the number of fatalities in 2002 and 2003;

Unfortunately, the situation in the new Member States is less advanced. The number of accidents and fatality rates remain, in general, high, due mainly to the inadequate road networks, lack of traffic law enforcement and ageing fleets of vehicles.

The role of renewing the fleets with more modern and safer vehicles is therefore a priority. Intelligent Transport Systems offer a promising short to medium term solution for improving road Safety.

In Europe, road safety is a so-called shared competence, and there are many stakeholders. We can therefore solve our problems only by working together and by further enhancing the efficiency of the whole transport and haulage sector;

This was the origin of the eSafety initiative in 2001 and of the eSafety Forum that was established in 2003 as a common Forum for all the stakeholders. The eSafety Forum aims to accelerate the development, deployment and use of Information and Communication Technologies in order to improve road safety.

The eSafety Forum is now well established in Europe. It has over 150 active members, and it organises regular Plenary Meetings twice per year.

The latest Forum meeting in September discussed three priorities: In-vehicle Emergency Call, Real-Time Traffic and Travel Information and Human-Machine Interaction. The meeting confirmed that ITS and eSafety are already national priorities in many Member States. We therefore expect eSafety to be deployed all over Europe in the coming years, starting with eCall.

Our studies indicate that when fully deployed, eCall can save a minimum of 2000 lives per year.

This Conference again will help us to learn from each other and work together towards global solutions, thereby avoiding fragmentation of the public sector requirements and the markets. Let's join forces and make ITS and eSafety truly global initiatives for our societies.

Thank you for your attention.