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**Renewable energy: an urgent need for
Europe**

Closing session of the European Conference for Renewable
Energy "Intelligent Policy Options"

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www.managenergy.net/conference/re0104.html

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First, I would like to thank you all for attending and taking part in this European conference, of which I, together with Mr Trittin, share the honour of being co-patron.

The idea behind this conference was to debate the choices which will shape the future development of renewable energy sources, in the wider European context.

It is being held in a unique context, marked by the enlargement of the European Union, which will become reality on 1 May, and by the growing importance, on the political scene, of worldwide competition for access to energy resources.

A number of reasons close to my heart moved me to accept the invitation to be one of the patrons: first, the need to take stock of four years of European policy to promote renewable energy sources, then the need to urge the Member States to step up the pace for implementing the decisions taken by all the Union's partners in this field and, finally, the need to plan ahead for the challenges facing Europe and the rest of the world in the future.

1. Background

Ten years ago, in March 1994, my predecessor Abel Matutes, the member of the European Commission responsible for energy policy at the time, was patron of the Madrid Conference on "An Action Plan for Renewable Energy Sources in Europe". The Declaration of Madrid of 18 March 1994 highlighted the barriers which were stopping renewable energy sources from breaking through onto the market and proposed an action plan plus objectives for the period up to 2010. The Madrid Conference, like the conference closing today, was about participation, providing a forum for discussion and debate, so that we could benefit fully from ideas, new approaches and measures tailored to the specific needs of each country or region in Europe, which is so diverse and yet ever closer together.

Ten years after Madrid it was time to take stock of what has been done at Community level since then, particularly over my period in charge of energy policy, and especially renewable energy sources, within the European Commission. Since I arrived at the Commission we have pulled out all the stops to create a legislative framework, fitting into the internal market and built around four pillars.

2. Legislation

The liberalisation of the gas and electricity markets, which will come into force on 1 July 2004 for industry and on 1 July 2007 at the latest for domestic consumers, puts us on the verge of the largest, most integrated energy market in the world. This is the context in which renewable energy sources will have to be developed. However, unlike the situation in the past, we now have a legislative framework made up of specific measures.

For example, in September 2001 the **directive on the promotion of electricity from renewable energy sources** was adopted, in which we set ourselves a target of generating 22% of our electricity from renewable sources by 2010.

Then in December 2002 we adopted the **directive on the energy performance of buildings**, which, if all the targets are met, will cut energy consumption in this sector by 22%.

In May 2003 this was followed by the **directive on the promotion of the use of biofuels**, with the objective of taking the market share of biofuels up to 5.75% by 2010.

Finally, at the start of this year we saw the adoption of the **directive on the promotion of cogeneration**, which will be published in February and offers potential energy savings of 230 mtoe per year by 2010, bringing with them a reduction of 45 million tonnes of CO₂.

We cannot claim victory yet, but there is no denying that the picture is no longer the same as it was just three years ago. I am pleased to say that the Commission has done a good job and, it must be added, has received support from both the Council and the European Parliament.

However, better regulation will not produce results unless it meets with a positive response from operators, which is why the legislation must be backed up by wide dissemination of the best examples of development of renewable energy sources. The Commission intends to contribute to this implementation process by stepping up Community support for the initiatives and action taken by the leading players in Europe.

3. Promotion

Today the new “Intelligent Energy – Europe” Programme, which brings together all the action in the field of renewable energy sources and energy efficiency, including the measures in the transport sector, plus cooperation on these subjects with the developing countries has a budget of 250 million euros for the enlarged European Union. So much for the story so far. We have sown but now we must reap and, before we can do that, a decisive period lies ahead.

4. Application by the Member States

The Commission’s role is to cooperate with the Member States and help them implement the measures adopted at Community level, to ensure that every State, without exception, applies the measures jointly adopted and, finally, to propose changes, where necessary, or even new measures if it emerges that those adopted will not be enough to achieve the priorities and meet the objectives set at Union level.

The Commission departments concerned have not yet finished appraising the reports sent in by the Member States on the progress made towards meeting the targets set by the directive on renewable, but I must appeal to every Member State to take responsibility for implementing the recommendations made in this directive faster so that they can meet the targets set for 2010.

But our task does not end at the Union’s frontiers. This conference must generate ideas which will enable us to intensify our international cooperation. The European Union and the States in the Johannesburg coalition are aware of the role which they can play on the world stage.

I hope that this European conference will trigger an in depth debate in all the European States in the coalition, but also at Union level, on the measures to be taken and the objectives to be set in order to put into action the September 2003 Johannesburg declaration on “The way forward on renewable energy”.

One more word about our role in collaboration with the developing countries: access to energy can be brought much closer to billions of people and millions of households if we harness renewable sources. Access to energy is, moreover, a way out of poverty and isolation. It is Europeans’ duty as leaders in the development of renewable energy sources to open up access to them to as many as possible: technological cooperation, vocational training and information on these new technologies are the priorities. Europe is also the leading source of funds for development aid: this must likewise be targeted on the energy field.

I wish to thank you for the contribution which you have made to Europe's policy by participating actively in this conference. I also salute and thank everyone involved in organising this event, the Members of the European Parliament here today and, in particular, those of you who sit on EUFORES, particularly the first President of the Forum, Mr Carlos Robles Piquer, his successor, Mrs Eryl McNally, and the third and current President, Mrs Mechtild Rothe, for their efforts to promote renewable energy sources in European, national and regional parliaments, even outside the Union, plus the representatives of the European trade associations and, especially, the European Renewable Energy Council and the German authorities for their efforts to promote renewable sources at both European and world level.

Allow me, if I may, to say one final thank you to all our partners in the Campaign for Take-off. The Campaign has been running for four years during which it has raised the support of over 700 local authorities, regions, institutions, energy agencies, associations and undertakings in 127 partnerships. Behind these partnerships there are the women and men providing the impetus for everything which has been achieved in the renewable energy field in cities, regions or islands all over Europe. I pay homage to them and congratulate them for their efforts. The prize-winners who received their awards this evening are symbols of commitment and excellence. Let us follow their example as pieces in the European mosaic.

Thank you for listening.