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Wissmann: IAA impressive demonstration of automotive industry's innovative strength / Chancellor Merkel opens the world's most important trade fair for mobility

Frankfurt am Main/Berlin (ots) -

"This IAA demonstrates the automotive industry's capacity for untiring renewal and innovation: Over 1,000 exhibitors have displays, covering an area equal to 33 football pitches. A total of 183 world premieres await 800,000 visitors, and more than 11,000 journalists from over 90 countries are reporting on the world's most important trade fair for mobility. The IAA is the automotive industry's 'crystal ball': here people can see, in a concentrated form, both the present and the future of mobility," stressed Matthias Wissmann, President of the German Association of the Automotive Industry (VDA), at the opening of the IAA in Frankfurt am Main. Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel opened the 64th IAA Cars at a ceremony attended by numerous high-ranking guests from politics, business and society.

The slogan of this IAA - "Future comes as standard" - makes it clear, Wissmann said, that at this leading trade fair not only vehicle concepts are being presented, but also cars that would soon be seen as series models on the roads: "Progress and its inherent dynamism are like gravity: simply not negotiable," Wissmann stated. He added that over the last five years the German automotive industry had invested nearly 100 billion euro in progress and in the year 2010 alone it had applied for over 3,000 new patents in Germany. "In order to see the results of this creativity, you do not have to visit the Patent Office, but the IAA," he continued. A large proportion of the innovation came from the suppliers, he explained, who account for 75 per cent of the value-added in a car.

"Manufacturers and suppliers together characterise the unique innovative strength of our industry. And we are not the only people who think so. In a recent study by Ernst & Young, foreign automotive managers selected Germany as the world's most attractive automotive location. That had not only to do with drive for innovation, but also with quality and productivity," the VDA president emphasised.

Wissmann recalled that in the years 2008 and 2009 the "management and works councils, the trade union IG Metall and the VDA, all pulling together, plus the well-directed support from the German Government," with the extension of short-time working, had been crucial in overcoming the crisis. "Let us continue writing this history together," he said. The recovery had also arrived in the workforce: today the automotive industry employs 724,100 people in Germany, which is over 18,000 more than it did last year. The VDA President also drew Chancellor Merkel's attention to the political promise in the coalition agreement, of keeping mobility affordable. "This earns you particular recognition from motorists."

"We do not just talk - we deliver," Wissmann said regarding the successes in CO2 reduction. Four years ago the passenger cars newly registered in Germany had an average CO2 value of 170 grams per kilometre, but two years ago the figure had already fallen to 154 grams. Wissmann stated, "Currently we are at 145 g CO2/km. This corresponds to fuel consumption of 5.9 litres per 100 km." The German group brands were able to show especially large progress. For example, the CO2 values of the newly registered passenger cars from German brands were, on average, lower than those of the competitors in all ten segments.

"Here in Frankfurt we are demonstrating recipes for the future CO2 diet: the optimised classical internal combustion engine, hybrid cars, plug-in vehicles and range extenders, plus 100-per-cent battery-powered electric vehicles and vehicles with fuel cells," Wissmann stressed. For the first time, he added, the IAA has a hall dedicated to the entire value-added chain for electric mobility. "So you are - if you like - also at the largest electric mobility fair in the world," the VDA president explained.

Concerning the situation on the financial markets Wissmann said: "We have not yet come through the crisis and the financial markets still look as though they are ailing. However, real life ensures relief. 2011 is turning into an automotive year. The global market will expand this year to over 65 million passenger cars sold, which is 10 million more than two years ago and a new record. The forecast for the year 2020 is 90 million passenger cars world-wide!"

The automotive business was currently in the process of returning to normal, Wissmann said. "This is not a new development. But in my understanding of economics, there is a huge difference between 'decreasing dynamism' and false talk of 'recession'," he emphasised, adding that the greatest concern was the debt situation in the USA and some European countries. "These 'loans' taken out on the present and the future have to be eliminated in a credible manner and under strong leadership. If the international scourge of debt can be overcome, confidence in the stability of the financial markets will return. The German Government has our support, if it consistently supports the European idea and our common currency, and simultaneously consistently pushes through a European debt limit." Only with a strong manufacturing sector, with a strong industrial base, could the challenges in Germany and Europe be mastered, he stated. "The financial markets have to serve the manufacturing sector again. Computer-aided high frequency trading and non-transparent financial products demand a comprehensive 'renaturation,' i.e. global regulation of this sector. And one thing must definitely apply if Europe wishes to maintain its place in global competition. Not the weakest get to set the standards, but the most innovative and the best," Wissmann underlined.

The IAA's Trade Days are on 15 and 16 September, and the 64th IAA Cars is open to the general public from 17 to 25 September 2011. Further information is available online, at: www.iaa.de.

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