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German Chancellor opens world's most important trade fair for mobility - comprehensive walking tour / Merkel: Innovation is visible here at the IAA

Frankfurt am Main/Berlin (ots) -

"Innovation - it is visible here at the IAA. The National Platform for Electric Mobility has done a good job. We have also provided incentives that we hope will get electric mobility in Germany moving, without creating a long-lasting culture of subsidies, e.g. the ten-year exemption from motor-vehicle tax for everyone buying an electric car before the end of 2015, the introduction of transferable plates for second cars - so that users save an insurance premium - special parking areas and much more besides. I would like to thank the automotive industry for its excellent co-operation in this National Platform. We had to make large strides towards one another, and some things remain to be done, but I think here it has been shown that joint, coherent action by politicians and business pays off," stressed German Chancellor Angela Merkel. She was speaking to numerous high-ranking guests from business, politics, trade unions and society at the opening ceremony of the 64th IAA Cars in Frankfurt am Main.

New powertrain technologies could be seen at the IAA, the Federal Chancellor said. "The requirements of the Federal Government and the European Union for reducing emissions always serve climate protection. But we also have a principle: everyone should still have the freedom to choose the car that suits them best. It is up to the customer to decide which powertrain and which model. Mobility was, is and will remain an expression of individuality. That is also the basic principle guiding our actions. For this reason I am also emphasising, in view of some objectively incorrect criticism, that the Consumption Labelling Ordinance brings us more transparency and provides an overview of differences in efficiency within a particular class. Comparisons between different classes are not what this is about. That has to be stated once again very clearly," the Chancellor continued. After the ceremonial opening of the 64th IAA Cars, there followed the traditional walking tour of the exhibition. Chancellor Merkel was accompanied by Matthias Wissmann, President of the German Association of the Automotive Industry (VDA), Federal Minister of Transport Peter Ramsauer, State Premier of Hesse Volker Bouffier, Frankfurt's Mayor Petra Roth and numerous high-ranking representatives of the automotive industry.

Angela Merkel entered Hall 11, the first stop on her walking tour, in a flurry of flashing cameras of the many photographers and camera teams present. Here she was welcomed by Norbert Reithofer, Chief Executive Officer of BMW AG. Reithofer showed the Chancellor the i3 Concept in particular, a 100-per-cent electric vehicle that will be launched onto the market in 2013 and assembled in the plant at Leipzig. Chancellor Merkel sat in the front passenger seat and praised the its "good feel" and the light touch of the doors.

In Hall 9 Bernhard Mattes, Chairman at Ford of Germany, received the Federal Chancellor and guided her to the red Evos Concept coupé study. The hybrid car gives onlookers a concrete view of the first globally oriented design philosophy for future generations of vehicles from Ford. The first models embodying major design elements of the Evos will already be on the market at the beginning of 2012. In Hall 8 Karl-Friedrich Stracke, Chairman of the Management Board of Adam Opel AG, presented the Opel Ampera, the first series-built car with a range extender which, according to Stracke, will become available on the market in November. The Chancellor's next stop was the Bosch stand in Hall 8. Franz Fehrenbach, Chairman of the Board of Management of Robert Bosch GmbH, explained to her the many different innovation steps that Bosch is taking to reduce CO2 by the application of electric mobility.

Chancellor Merkel made a conscious decision to visit the "Hall of Electric Mobility" (Hall 4.0), with the first-ever display on the entire value-added chain for the electric mobility ecosystem. At the Streetscooter stand she was welcomed by Arndt G. Kirchhoff, member of the VDA Managing Board and Managing Director of the Kirchhoff Group, and Prof. Achim Kampker of the RWTH Aachen University.

Kirchhoff drew attention to the successful co-operation between innovative suppliers and academia, and Prof. Kampker explained the Streetscooter - an electric car study with a range of up to 130 kilometres designed to be a city vehicle - and added that the German Post had already commissioned its development. Customers could buy the electric car, he said, but the battery was not included in the purchase price. Instead it would be leased as part of a service package.

John Elkann, President of the Fiat Group, explained to Ms Merkel the new Fiat Panda model generation. The most important component in the powertrain is the new two-cylinder petrol engine (TwinAir), which is used in various versions.

At the Schaeffler Group stand (Hall 5.1) Maria-Elisabeth Schaeffler and Jürgen Geissinger, Chief Executive of the Schaeffler Group, welcomed the Federal Chancellor and explained the optimisation potentials exploited in the company's components for classical powertrains, hybrids and electric vehicles.

In Audi's pavilion erected especially for the IAA 2011 Rupert Stadler, Chairman of the Board of Management at Audi AG, showed the Chancellor the Audi A2 Concept, an electric car with an extremely lightweight construction. He explained that the vehicle can "fill up" on electrical energy by induction, which does not need a charging cable. Furthermore, the Audi range included the Q5, A6 and A8 hybrid vehicles, which meant that 100-per-cent electric driving was already possible for distances of up to three kilometres.

In Hall 3 Prof. Martin Winterkorn, Chairman of the Board of Management of Volkswagen AG, presented to Angela Merkel

Volkswagen's world premiere, the VW up!, a nippy small car for urban driving with space for four people and a purchase price that will be in the four-figure range. At Porsche, also in Hall 3, the company's Management Board Chairman Matthias Müller showed the Federal Chancellor the world premiere of the Porsche 911 and pointed out its much lower fuel consumption compared to the current model.

The Chancellor's walking tour ended with a visit to the "Festhalle," where Ms Merkel was welcomed by Dieter Zetsche, Chairman of the Board of Management of Daimler AG. Zetsche showed her the research vehicle F125!, a look at the technology of the more distant future. He also explained to Ms Merkel the various powertrain options for the new B-Class: the classical internal combustion engine, range extenders, and fuel cells. Zetsche drew attention to the relatively low-cost investment in the infrastructure for hydrogen. After the tour, the German Chancellor said she was impressed by the drive for innovation at the German manufacturers and suppliers.

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