

20.09.2012 – 11:44 Uhr

IAA 2012 - world's largest commercial vehicle trade fair - opens in Hannover / Wissmann: Secure industrial basis in Europe

Hannover (ots) -

The world's largest trade fair for mobility, transport and logistics has begun. At the opening ceremony for the 64th IAA Commercial Vehicles, Matthias Wissmann, President of the German Association of the Automotive Industry (VDA), told an audience of around 700 high-ranking guests from politics and business, "This IAA is an impressive demonstration of the drive for innovation throughout the commercial vehicle industry. The new vehicles are becoming even more efficient in terms of consumption, even safer and even cleaner. Over 350 world premieres - two thirds of them by suppliers - document the progress made in reducing CO₂, in aerodynamics, optimising classical drive trains and developing alternative drive trains." With 1,904 exhibitors from 46 countries, the IAA has also become even more international. Over 2,000 journalists from 56 countries are reporting on the IAA, which runs until 27 September.

"Our exhibitors are presenting their innovations on an area of 260,000 square metres - which is equal to 44 football pitches. They have trucks that already meet the coming Euro VI standard. They are cleaner than ever before: nitrogen oxide emissions are down by 80 per cent, and particulates are down by two thirds. The slogan of the IAA, 'Commercial Vehicles - Driving the Future,' is therefore virtually tailor-made for this trade fair," Wissmann said. He added that major topics were the optimisation of aerodynamics and vehicles with alternative drive trains. "With less drag, and with hybrid and electric motors, all the way to fuel cells, commercial vehicles will in future use even less fuel and therefore have lower CO₂ output," the VDA president underlined. New driver-assistance systems were making commercial vehicles even safer, he said, and trucks were already leading innovation, for example with the emergency braking assistant.

After two very successful years, in 2012 the conditions have turned tougher, Wissmann emphasised, referring to the state of the commercial vehicle business. The industry was feeling the effects of the national debt crisis in some Southern European countries, while the Western European market for heavy trucks (over 6t) had shrunk to 250,000 units in the current year. "Yet we must not restrict our view to Europe. The global market for heavy trucks (over 6t) - which is relevant for the German commercial vehicle manufacturers - is remaining stable in 2012. The growing US market can compensate for the fall in Western Europe. In 2012 the US market will expand by up to 20 per cent, to over 350,000 units. This will benefit German manufacturers, who take around 30 per cent of the market for trucks in classes 4 to 8 (over 6.3t) in the United States. And we should not forget the Russian market. This year it will grow by one quarter and at over 160,000 vehicles it is almost twice the size of the German market."

The 64th IAA Commercial Vehicles was opened by the German Federal Minister of Transport, Dr Peter Ramsauer. The State Premier of Lower Saxony, David McAllister, gave a welcoming address, as did Stephan Weil, Mayor of the state capital Hannover.

In his speech Wissmann stressed, "Mobility is the foundation for prosperity in our society and is a prerequisite for a successful industrial sector. Germany generates over one quarter (27 per cent) of the gross industrial value-added in the EU - which is more than the United Kingdom and France taken together." The VDA president said it was "dangerous" that the industrial value-added in European countries was drifting further and further apart: "In Germany, in recent years in particular, we have seen that it is manufacturing that keeps the wheels turning in difficult times. Germany, with its strong industrial base, has escaped the crisis and is in a more robust position than many other EU states. No other country in Europe invests as much in research and development. And around one third of total German investment in research and development is borne by the automotive industry. Only with such enormous investments can Germany maintain its lead in technology. Our companies know that those who stop improving have stopped being good," Wissmann stated.

However, he continued, the commercial vehicle industry and the transport business also needed politicians to provide a reliable framework and a sound basis for planning. Wissmann stressed, "This applies above all to decisions in the transport business to invest in new Euro VI trucks. The effectiveness of a more favourable toll class for the market launch of especially environmentally friendly trucks became apparent several years ago when the Euro V vehicles were introduced. This opportunity should now also swiftly be used for Euro VI."

The VDA president pointed out that the IAA - alongside the exhibits - was also a significant communication platform: "The programme includes far more than 30 IAA specialist events and IAA congresses. They range from load securing and hazardous goods transport, the digital factory, advice on purchasing telematics, and CO₂ reduction, all the way to financial services for the commercial vehicle business. Furthermore, the IAA is a major recruiting fair with events such as the VDA's GoIng, WorkING and the schoolchildren's programme, dedicated to the upcoming generation of engineers. "One thing is certain: the world-wide commercial vehicle market will continue to grow in the medium and long term. And the German commercial vehicle industry will do everything it can to continue expanding its market share around the globe. And for this we need the best minds," Wissmann emphasised.

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