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Green Jobs

Speech given by

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Ladies and gentlemen,

The economic crisis is a catalyst for structural change that will put a new face on the world economy and bring about lasting changes in our national economic systems. Climate and environmental protection is playing an increasingly important role in discussions on the future shape of economic policy. The crisis is regarded as an opportunity to promote employment in the environment sector by means of so-called “green jobs”.

Trade and industry accept their responsibility for the environment. For people in business, environmental protection is not a new issue, but a fact of life that has existed for decades. In response to climate change many companies have launched ambitious climate protection programmes. For a long time now industry and commerce have been involved in a large number of voluntary agreements and undertakings, thus

demonstrating in an efficient and effective manner the responsibility they bear for environmental protection.

In the current debate about economic stimulus packages and long-term industrial policy decisions there has to be a comprehensive approach to sustainability resting equally on the three pillars of the economy, the environment and society. The need for global efforts to protect the environment must be seen as an opportunity for employment growth across the board and not just as a chance for a small group of employees in the so-called environmental industry.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Up to now the “green jobs” debate has been too narrow and misleading. In the traditional concept of green jobs the focus is exclusively on the so-called “environmental industry”. However, there is

no such thing as an “environmental industry” forming a separate branch of the economy in its own right. On the contrary, the environmental protection sector incorporates many traditional branches of the economy, such as the manufacturing industry, the construction industry and the services sector. This means not only that there is no uniform database for employment in the environmental sector, but also that there are also distinct problems of categorisation. The environmental industry also covers the waste management industry as well as water supply and waste water treatment, all of which are services traditionally provided by the public sector.

Moreover, environmental protection is becoming increasingly process and product-oriented. Cars are manufactured with an ever greater degree of energy efficiency, and as a product, too, they are much more environmentally friendly. However, it is virtually impossible to establish the impact that

product and process-related environmental protection has on employment policy.

Another problem with the traditional “green jobs” concept is that while an engine driver might have a “green job”, this is not true of either the worker who built the engines or the steel worker who produced the steel for them. Many so-called “green jobs” require preliminary work in areas that cannot claim to have “green jobs”. Solar technology, thermal insulation and bioenergy would be inconceivable without the chemicals industry. Environmental protection thrives on the products and innovative services of “traditional” industry.

Ladies and gentlemen,

There is no point using the “green jobs” concept to divide the labour market into good = green and bad = non-green. This narrow view is not helpful

in addressing the job policy challenges posed by climate change and the need to create jobs and prosperity for the earth's rapidly growing population. Instead, the main idea inspiring "green jobs" should be that environmental protection, increased employment and economic development go hand in glove.

Sound environmental policy along market economy lines can develop into an engine for growth and employment. The global demand for new drive systems in the mobility sector, for effective thermal insulation systems and efficient heating, ventilation, air conditioning and control engineering in the building sector, for innovative traffic management systems and low-energy electrical devices opens up job opportunities in every branch of the economy. Predictable and investment-friendly conditions are needed for innovative companies to make the best use of this opportunity.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The economic crisis and climate change are the two big challenges we face at present. They must be mastered together. An “either-or” is out of the question. The conditions must be created for more growth and employment as well as for more innovation and research. Trade and industry are ready to partner the politicians in their efforts. In both areas, the business world is part of the solution, not of the problem.

Thank you.