

**Inaugural speech for the 80th Geneva International
Motor Show
delivered by Mr. François Longchamp,
President of the State Council,
Palexpo, Thursday, March 4, 2010**

Madam President of the Swiss Confederation,
Mr. President of the Geneva International Motor Show,
Ladies and gentlemen the representatives of the federal, cantonal and municipal authorities,
Ladies and gentlemen,

For 80 years Geneva has had a date with the automotive industry.
For 80 years Geneva has asserted itself, here at Palexpo, as a member of the circle of global exhibitions that count.
And for 80 years Geneva has played host to a sector that arouses passion and criticism.

I am one of those people who, by nature, prefer passion. I will leave the option of pessimism to others. To those people, who harbour suspicious hatred for the car, who accuse it of enslaving humankind, who see it as the cause of all evils, I feel like saying that the car does not impose anything on us and does not expect anything of us. It merely responds to our expectations.

The automotive sector, more than any other industry, has always had to care about its customers' expectations. More than heavy industry, which depends on public or military contracts. More than aviation, which has long been geared to national companies.

It is probably one of the reasons why the car left its mark on the 20th century. That's also why it fascinates us. To observe the history of the automobile is to plunge into the recent history of the human soul. Into the history of our desire for freedom, power, safety and comfort. And when it becomes adventurous, the car testifies to the most noble of human qualities: humans' will to "abolish geographical, cultural and political borders in the world", as André Citroën said on the eve of the Yellow Cruise in 1931.

The Yellow Cruise of the 21st century will lead us to take up two new challenges: indebtedness and energy. These are the main lessons we have learned from the last three years. First of all, the increase in the oil price, which reached 140 dollars a barrel in May 2008. And just afterwards, a severe economic and financial crisis, the repercussions of which we are still enduring. We will therefore have to learn to release ourselves from debt and energy.

The car manufacturers have realized that they had to protect themselves against credit risks. Most of them have already developed financial competencies that enable them to do so. But it will not suffice to release ourselves from credit. We will also have to break free from energy dependency. Customers - even those who are well-off - no longer want fuel-guzzling cars. As for national States, even those that are the least environmentally compliant are today compelled to open up to alternative energies. It is their independence

and sovereignty that are at stake. It is better to make energy savings than to wage wars motivated by the oil race.

The future will belong to the manufacturers who will be able to optimally integrate this given parameter. That is evidenced by this Motor Show, which features around one hundred world premieres, about fifteen of which are devoted to alternative energies.

The development of the automobile will also be decided in the emerging markets, in China, India, Brazil and Indonesia. Ten years ago China produced one tenth the number of cars that were made in the USA. Today it produces twice as many. In all these countries, it will be necessary to produce and sell without excessive indebtedness, and without mortgaging the future in terms of energy.

It is a tough task. But these efforts will give the automotive industry a considerable advantage over other sectors. The manufacturers, compelled as they are to cut their vehicles' fuel consumption by 30% to 40%, are developing technologies that they will be able to commercialize on a large scale, when we are faced with a true energy shortage. Tomorrow we will see automobile brands become leaders in innovative energy solutions, just as we are seeing the Chinese market leader for batteries and energy cells become a major automotive player.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Over the last three years the automotive industry has been through some severe turbulence. Only a few dozen kilometres away from here - that is, on our doorstep - in the Rhône or Arve Valley, thousands of jobs, that is, thousands of men and women employed in the aluminium or precision screw-machining industry, have suffered the consequences of this turbulence.

Under these difficult circumstances, I thank you and your teams, Mr. President of the Motor Show, for offering us an exhibition which, once again, is an honour for Geneva and Switzerland to host. We are pleased that this 80th Geneva Motor Show marks the beginning of a new era of growth. Growth founded on sustainability rather than on power and indebtedness. People will continue to come to the Motor Show to dream, to admire, to treat themselves. But they will also come here to gain inspiration and to discover the trends which will become established tomorrow in all sectors of the economy.

On behalf of the State Council of the Republic and Canton of Geneva, I wish you all - manufacturers, sales persons, accessory manufacturers, technicians, or more simply car lovers - a magnificent Motor Show 2010.

March 4, 2010