

**Address by Mr. Luc Argand, President of the International Geneva Motor Show
on the occasion of the inauguration of the 80th International Geneva Motor Show,
March 4th, 2010**

Madam President of the Swiss Confederation, welcome to Palexpo, Geneva, on the occasion of the inauguration of the 80th Motor Show. By being present, you have agreed to perpetuate the tradition and we are honoured and delighted.

Mr. President of the State Council, I also extend a special welcome to you, even though you are at home here at Palexpo. I need hardly remind the audience that you magnificently steered the legal and legislative process that led to the establishment of Palexpo SA, the project manager of the substantial renovation and redecoration works the result of which you can see for yourselves. I thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen, members of the Federal, Cantonal and Municipal authorities,
Messrs. Administrative Officers,
Your Excellencies the Ambassadors,
Ladies and gentlemen the guests,
we are very pleased and honoured to welcome you here.

What a strange year we have experienced here since our last meeting one year ago:

- A gale-force wind has swept through the world of finance and industry;
- Exhibitions, congresses and trade fairs have obviously been caught in the storm.

Yet last year, in the middle of the crisis, I was pleased to be able to inaugurate a beautiful Show, although I did point out that this fine performance was perhaps due to a final advertising drive on the part of the manufacturers, who were trying to promote their products with budgets that had been approved in 2008 at a time when the sky was still blue!

During this year 2009, the Fondation du Salon de l'auto, which I have the honour to preside, obviously did not escape the budgetary revision exercise, the study of forward-looking scenarios but also of disaster scenarios that even included the outright cancellation of today's Show in the event that the manufacturers - hard-hit by bankruptcies, restructuring plans and massive redundancy programmes - would have to forego what might seem, at first sight, to be superfluous, namely, presenting beautiful products in a beautiful showcase.

What was I fearing and what do I still fear?:

I was afraid that some of the automobile manufacturers' young managers, from a new generation, might ask themselves "Why should we spend all these millions on exhibiting our products at motor shows situated in a static, old-style setting, on the old continent of Europe? Let's go to Asia, South America, the emerging countries, or let's give up the Motor Show completely and use the new information technologies, the virtual world, to publicize our cars."

And then there was a minor miracle:

In the middle of this maelstrom, suddenly, with summer 2009 approaching, there was an increase in the number of registrations and reservations for the 2010 Show, and several world-premiere presentations were announced.

By September 95% of the stand surface area was rented out. What a pleasant surprise! But what a paradox this success was at a time when the automotive industry was experiencing an unprecedented crisis.

So what has happened?

Success was not achieved automatically. It was, of course, the success of the previous editions, the reputation of our Motor Show and the services provided by Palexpo that were behind it. Then there

are the intrinsic qualities of Geneva, not only the beauty of the site but the general conditions, the importance of which I stress every year. They include:

The exceptional hotel offering, the convenience. The quality of life, the proximity of an efficient airport and train station that are gateways to the Show and then, lastly, its visitor-friendly aspect, as it is not too large.

Indeed, our Show is not large, but this is regarded by the manufacturers and guests as a quality: the latter can take in the whole of the Exhibition Hall at a single glance; moreover, Switzerland is not a car-manufacturing country so all the exhibitors feel they are on an equal footing here.

We also tried to promote all these qualities by, in addition, fostering among the manufacturers the slightly provocative idea that the other four major foreign motor shows – Detroit, Paris, Frankfurt and Tokyo – which had suffered a great deal and sustained some marked decreases in surface-area reservations, should perhaps disappear and give way to the small Geneva Show. In short, the ultimate aim of our promotional campaign was to present Geneva as the only Show worth exhibiting at or as the only surviving Show, with all the pretentiousness and provocativeness that this hypothetical posture implies! This provocation appears to have worked because I read the other day in a foreign automotive magazine with a large readership the following statement: “The world's most important motor show is indeed the Geneva Show. Not so much in terms of its attendance figures or its size as on account of the aura it enjoys among both the manufacturers and the public.”

So much for my summary of how our efforts to promote our Motor Show and Geneva were rewarded.

Yet I continue to ask myself, in general, what the reason is for this paradoxical success in such a turbulent world.

Well, in my view, it is probably the interest that shows in the broad sense of the term have aroused for more than a thousand years. Organizers of all kinds endeavour to meet demand by creating shows.

Museums are presented today like a show.

A car race is obviously a show and our Motor Show is, as it were, a spectacle.

Visual and physical contact with the work of art, with the object exhibited, the product, is not diminishing.

Let us add to this the extraordinary efforts deployed by the automotive manufacturers to improve and adapt to demand in a world that is hostile to them, which obviously benefits our Show.

You will notice on the stands the intense research and creativity effort the manufacturers have made to comply with the new trends towards energy-savings: the Green Pavilion, exhibiting new technologies, the Green Path which designates the place where the models are located for the public at large, but the Show also gratifies the visitor's taste for classicism, futurism, dreaming and even power: which is decried or even out of fashion... There is something for every taste.

All this makes me optimistic, as you are said to be, Madam President; I was already optimistic last year but my optimism was a little shaky. It was inspired above all by the spectacle of the comet of prosperity, which was, however, already departing.

Today my optimism is based on a reasoned observation of the stability of the public's interest in what will always remain the magic of the car and on the highly combative capability of this sector to adapt.

My thanks to all of you for being present at this inauguration, this loyal and prestigious presence constitutes our life blood.

My thanks also go to you, President Hensler, who agreed to become president of Palexpo SA in addition to your office of Chancellor last year, with such effective support from Mr. Claude Membrez, your General Manager and all his Palexpo team, whom I also thank warmly for all that was

accomplished over this last year and in particular over this last quarter in an often quite...sporting atmosphere!

Thanks to you, dear Rolf; Rolf Studer in his capacity of General Manager of the Motor Show and the conductor of the spectacle that our Show represents.

And thank you from the bottom of my heart to all those who also contribute to the success:

Ladies and gentlemen the politicians, the ladies and gentlemen from the media, the public services, the police and the security services.

Thank you, finally, to the Municipality of Grand-Saconnex:

The ocean liner – which is what Palexpo is called at Grand-Saconnex – sincerely thanks the captain of its home port.

I welcome you all, ladies and gentlemen.