

**SPEECH**

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## **ICT for a global sustainable future**

*Check Against Delivery  
Seul le texte prononcé fait foi  
Es gilt das gesprochene Wort*

### **ICT for a global sustainable future**

Brussels, 23<sup>rd</sup> of January

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning and welcome to the second day of the PARADISO conference.

Yesterday was a very successful day with many interesting views on a true sustainable future. We heard messages on several global concerns: income differences, the recent financial crisis, global warming, the demographic expansion and the energy problem.

According to many of the speakers, these alerts indicate the need to raise the level of discussion on the economic, environmental and social objectives, to achieve a more sustainable development for our societies.

Today we will continue our work on how the European Commission meets the challenges of a sustainable future, and what the future holds for ICT research.

I would like to pose the questions and the leitmotif of this conference again, how can ICT help to achieve a global sustainable future? And how can ICT improve the well being of the citizen of the world?

The ICT industry clearly plays an important role in the European and global economy, it was said yesterday and it will be said today. However, if we want to achieve a true sustainable future, we must not forget the social values that are embedded ICT. The advanced tools, developed to meet the needs of the user, are a big part of the ICT industry's contribution to growth. We communicate through social networks and communities, through videoconferencing and podcasting. But not only do we communicate; we also contribute to these phenomena in various ways.

It is the small contribution of millions of people that creates a multiplier effect on the market. This immense population of users without a doubt impact technology and, as citizens, also impact society. Indeed, ICT has great potential to contribute to a sustainable future, not only through a quantifiable economic growth, but also through empowering users and citizens, improving quality of life.

ICT can and must play a central role in society, and it is our task today, to present what has already been done by the Commission and to anticipate possible ways forward for the

best use of research investments. Even beyond promoting industrial growth and innovation. The impact of ICT is pervasive and multifaceted. Just think of the influence that radio, television, mobile telephony, e-mail, electronic databases and Internet has had on our way of living and on our way of interacting with each other, on our access to knowledge and on our political choices. ICT also embodies other possibilities to improve life. Think of the applications of ICT for improving energy efficiency, for monitoring environmental changes, for implementing smart grids, for creating new sources of renewable energy, for creating truly sustainable ways of transport, for enabling e-learning and distance learning, improving health and enhancing e-democracy.

As Commissioner Reding said yesterday, we must respond to the real needs of the market, reinforce our investments in research and we must cooperate. ICT does not only drive the economic transformation, but also the social evolution and enables improvements of energy efficiency and environmental sustainability.

I believe that a multidisciplinary approach is imperative. Traditionally, we have seen that the most valuable innovation originates from the intersection of different disciplines, when people with different backgrounds meet and discuss new perspectives. This is what we are about to do today, in the following three panel sessions. We have brought together experts and personalities from the different sectors of technology, society and economy.

The first session will cover ICT related initiatives funded by the European Commission in order to achieve a sustainable future.

What kind of European ICT research has the potential to change and meet the needs of the future, is the main question discussed in the second panel session. It is time to improve our understanding of the social and environmental potential of new technologies and to identify research directions which can effectively pave the way to a better world.

I am also delighted to see so many interesting contributions to our afternoon session. Featured presentations are the result of an open call arranged by the Club of Rome in order to involve the most appropriate organisations engaged in this topic.

I would also like to welcome Mr Keith Walters who is the first vice chair of the EDUC Commission at the Committee of the Regions, and Ms Anna-Maria Darmanin, member of the European Economic and Social Committee. The regions of Europe suffer hard from the financial crisis but do tremendous work to contribute to a sustainable future. The economic and social development of Europe is our main priority and a precondition to the development of our societies. It is an honour to have you both present.

I wish you all an inspiring and productive day. Thank you for your attention.

I will now give the floor to Mr Walters.