

Good morning.

Thank you all for your presence, thank you for this abundant presence in the room, also at the queue at the entrance, the next time if there are still people outside, I will ask Joëlle to transport us by satellite!

It is a pleasure to welcome you this morning, and to welcome this 9th Edition of the Conference on the European Space Policy at the Palais d'Egmont, in the Salle Europe. Belgium is very happy to act in the field of space, and, therefore, every time there is an occasion to take part in processes such this one, we do it with pleasure.

It is also my pleasure to receive so many experts from different countries, and first of all, it is all the time a pleasure to debate again with Maroš. For sure, it is not the first time, we have met already in many other occasions, but this one is particularly important to us. I would like to underline, just in few words, because a lot of the experts from the space industry are here, that for Belgium it is crucial to take part in the process; indeed, we are funding members not only of the United Nations and the European Union, but we host also the seats of the political institutions of the European Union in Brussels, as well as of the NATO. Therefore, we are quite involved in the defence, moreover, since the beginning in the '70s, we took part in the process aiming to organise the European Space Agency. Indeed, it was very important for Belgium to be also at the origin of such a new agency and we contributed to different important projects organised by it. I remember, as I said to Maroš some minutes ago, when I was the Minister of Finance for 13 years in Belgium and I was following the process of launching the Galileo project.

At the time, in one formation of the Council Galileo was a dream, while in the ECOFIN Council, on the other hand, it was more much more complicated; therefore, we have tried to organise a balanced vision of the project. We tried to do our best to, on the one hand, combine a dream of some members of the discussions, and, on the other, the reality of the budget of the European Union and the different budgetary provisions. It was interesting to take part in that process.

Of course, we also had lot of valid collaborations, with countries such as France and Sweden, in the field of the observation of the Earth, but also with third

parties such as Russia. As you can see, Belgium is very involved in the process and it is due to the fact that ever since the '60s, all the different governments were convinced that we needed to invest in the space industry, not only by supporting 60 companies installed in Belgium and involved in the process but also to try to come up with answers to some global challenges that we are facing now.

Currently, as a member of the Economic and Financial Affairs Council, the General Affairs Council, I took part in the discussions about the climate change, security threats, internal and external security, but also the necessity to manage migration with a real control of the external borders, and so on and so forth.

In all those different fields, we need tools and, for that, we need, in many different ways, a real support from the space industry. But when we are discussing all those issues, we never talk about satellites nor about the possibility to collaborate with the space industry, instead, we talk about the goals that we have such as gaining a real control of the external borders, possibility to manage the evolution of the climate, etc.

I am sure that we need to seriously consider a part of your projects, we need to see if it is possible to define how to handle the migration issue, as well as the path to work together with the space industry in order to bring new solutions about the migration issue, as well as for the fight against terrorism, climate change, etc. It is the reason why I was trying to start a discussion about the following Multiannual Financial Framework, the investments capacity in Europe. There is already the so-called "Junker Plan", with more than 300 billion euro of investment, but what part of those investments was devoted to the space industry. If one needs to manage the mobility issues, it is of course important to invest in infrastructures, transportations, infrastructures, but maybe also in some new elements in the space industry able to give solutions for the mobility questions.

Two additional points that I would like to tackle. Firstly, the space industry is certainly a success, we have experienced the same success with Airbus and it is maybe important to do more and in the similar way in the defence industry. We do not have a real European defence industry and I am sure it is quite important to enhance the capacity of the European Union to acquire a real defence industry

and not just to speak about the better collaboration with all the different parties, not just to discuss about the European feeler in the NATO, but actually to do one day the necessary thing, in order to organise a real European defence industry, just like we have organised the space industry, like we tried to organise, through Airbus, a part of the aeronautics industry.

Finally, I would like to emphasise that we need to be more and more self-sufficient, we need to develop a real capacity of a European Union autonomy, a free and open access to space due to our own capacity. Since November of the last year, we developed the feeling that it could perhaps become more difficult to have the same access through the USA to different activities and thus, perhaps, it is an additional reason, for us to be ready to do more with our own capacities. I think that this could be an impression shared also by the European institutions as well as some member states of the European Union.

In conclusion, I would like to underline that I am very pleased to help you to organise this 9th Edition of the Conference on the European Space Industry. I am also very proud to see that Belgium is a real, sterling part of the space industry and I am hoping that after your messages, we will be able to develop some new ideas, some new dreams, that maybe can be turned into reality with manageable costs.

Thank you