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**ISI “Integrated Satellite Initiative”  
Technology Platform Public launch**

**Brussels, Wednesday 1 February 2006**

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to participate in the official launch of the “Integrated Satcom Initiative -ISI-” Technology Platform.

I welcome this initiative and in particular the industry’s commitment to pool it’s research investment and innovation in a field that is important and strategic for Europe. Today, I would like to share with you some thoughts on how ISI may contribute to the policy goals of the European Union.

### **1. The importance of satellite communications**

Satellite communications have brought many benefits to society and citizens, in Europe and worldwide. We have seen new markets for audiovisual and media. Digital TV for example has already been broadcast over pan-European satellite systems for several years now, with hundreds of digital TV programmes provided to European consumers. The wide footprints of satellites help humanitarian organisations to respond to emergencies or disasters, wherever they occur. Satellite coverage may also be the only way to provide broadband connectivity to very remote areas, in the EU or globally, as shown by the recently announced EU Strategy for Africa.

### **2. What about the future?**

That is today; what about tomorrow? I expect satellite to make a vital contribution to the renewed “Lisbon” agenda for jobs and growth and to the i2010 strategy for the European Information Society. Satellite can help build new markets and applications, for example high definition TV is already a reality in Japan, the US and Canada. IPTV and Mobile television offer further opportunities.

But, as the i2010 strategy points out, we are all faced with the challenge of digital convergence. The satellite industry too needs a strategy for convergence: the virtually unlimited range of applications will demand new business models and bring new players into the game. This will call for new partnerships in industry and you will have to look beyond the traditional space industry.

### **3. Challenges and benefits**

In the coming years, you are facing new challenges:

- i) Rising competition: A strong satellite communication sector in Europe has to be able to offer and to withstand strong competition. Facility-based competition has been recognised as an efficient way to catalyse innovation take-up and bring down costs. Therefore, I will make it a priority to see technologies getting a fair chance to compete; this is what I mean by “technology neutrality”.
- ii) Public and private research funds will be hard won. Money is scarce. The Space Council of last December allocated a budget envelope to satellite communication significantly lower than that requested by the European Space Agency. The EU financial perspectives are less than proposed by the Commission. You will as a result be under pressure to show that each euro invested on satellite communications research is well spent.
- iii) The roadblocks are many: We still lack coordinated views on critical issues such as regulatory practice, standards or spectrum requirements. The Commission is looking to industry to build a broad industrial consensus in these areas.
- iv) Strategy and vision is patchy: A strong space industry in Europe needs strong vision. Europe can be proud of its space industry: two manufacturers and two operators are world leaders. And this has been achieved with a public support six times lower than that of the USA. The European Space Agency has done a good job in helping this to happen. Galileo and GMES initiatives demonstrate the EU commitment to the space industry. Still, the

industry is vulnerable. It has to perform strongly in the market performance to survive. Recovery seems to be on the way in the Communications sector. The winners will those that meet the challenges in dynamic way – taking advantages of the strategic opportunities.

On all these challenges, ISI should work towards industry wide consensus to provide the appropriate response from your sector.

#### **4. State of play of the research programmes**

As regards the next research Framework Programme, FP7, the months ahead will be very busy. The political agreement reached on the new Financial Perspectives at the end of 2005 allows us to move forward. We may even have a revised legislative package under the Austrian Presidency.

My aim is that the revised FP7 proposal should favour industrial competitiveness, growth and job creation. We need to achieve critical mass through industry-led initiatives at EU level. Technology platforms fit this logic, as they help industry to reach critical mass through drawing together diverse research efforts and by the mobilisation of both public and private resources.

European Technology Platforms help industrial and academic research communities to co-ordinate their research and tailor it to a common “strategic research agenda” (SRA), which sets out R&D goals, time frames and action plans for technological advances that are relevant to industry and society.

From the membership point of view, ETP stakeholders have to support their strategic research agenda financially and to monitor its implementation.

Each ETP should be operated in an open mode, with all interested stakeholders, whether they be small or large able to take part if they have the know-how and are willing to pool this knowledge.

#### **5. Conclusions**

It is for all these reasons that I congratulate you for creating the ISI Technology Platform. I understand this has been done in a relatively short time frame of intensive work by all the partners.

I want also to stress the importance of collaborative work in the field that you are addressing: in the era of convergence, technology is becoming ever smarter and complex, numerous business models are considered, competition is fierce and user expectations are ever higher, with requirements for ever more services at lower cost.

Research efforts should not be wasted and it is essential that they support technologies and standards with the largest possible industrial footprint.

Your platform - ISI - should support this objective. It is a domain where co-ordinated industrial approaches are a key requirement. I believe you can make a vital contribution to industrial competitiveness, growth and jobs. And I wish you good work and great success.

Thank you for your kind attention.