Speech by the Minister of Infrastructure and the Environment, Melanie Schultz van Haegen, to mark the opening of the Informal Transport Council on 14 April 2016

Dear Commissioner, esteemed colleagues, members of the European Parliament, ACEA representatives, ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to Amsterdam! I've been looking forward to hosting you here today.

I'm delighted that so many of you have joined us today. This clearly shows the wide scope of the subject we will be discussing.

And I want to extend a special welcome to the European car manufacturers. Your involvement is crucial now that we're on the threshold of a new era of mobility.

Creating space to introduce connected and automated driving on European roads: thát's what we are talking about.

Today I want to take steps with you to make that new era possible across Europe.
It's the first time we are discussing connected and automated driving at political level in the EU. We will be sending an important signal to the market.

But we're not only going to talk. I also want you to experience the future.

After lunch, all heads of delegations will be going for a automated and partial hands off drive. We have connected, automated and semi-autonomous vehicles ready for you outside, from showroom to research cars. You will make a journey of 16 kilometres through the busiest part of Amsterdam – in fact, through one of the busiest parts of the EU.

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I'd like to thank the car manufacturers and participants for their cooperation! You'll be showing the rest of the world how far European technology has advanced.

It also says something about your confidence. Because let's face it: it's a bit of a jungle out there! So this won't be a ride for the faint hearted.

To put you in the right mood: in 1771, the inventor[1] of the first ever self-propelled vehicle ended up driving into a brick wall.

And in the first challenge for self-driving cars in 2004 not a single car reached the finish!

But I know for certain that you will arrive safe and sound at the Innovation Expo where you will be given an update on smart and green mobility.

This afternoon a unique meeting will take place in the Europe building which is situated here on the same premises: a combined Informal Transport and Environment Council, where we will join our environmental counterparts to debate the future of smart and green mobility.

Before exploring the opportunities that lie before us, I'd like to introduce the subject we'll be discussing today with a short film.

[Film:]

Are we ready for the future?[2] That's the question today.
I am sure the movie has inspired you!

Normally we invite an expert to introduce the subject. Today I will do this by myself, because the last two years I have really gone into the matter of automated driving, and I am excited about it!
So, forgive me to take the floor so long!

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[1] Nicolas-Joseph Cugnot
[2] De film eindigt met deze vraag.

Of course, afterwards I am very interested to hear your reactions.

Personally, I certainly find this a highly interesting period.
Let me say a bit more about that.

Five years ago I was in Rio de Janeiro, with a trade delegation. Among the places we visited was a traffic control centre. And what did I see there?

If there was a power cut, they could warn the schools.
If they saw a traffic jam, they could immediately divert the traffic.
If there was a flood, they knew exactly where the ambulances were.

I asked where they got this data.

The answer amazed me. They had 800 people equipped with binoculars standing on the roofs of the highest buildings.
Just by using their eyes, these 800 people kept track of everything going on in the city and called the centre to report what they saw!

Smart traffic management avant la lettre!
Of course, totally without the intelligent data options we have nowadays.

I've seen so much technological innovation since then: cars that can communicate with each other and the road.
Cars that help drivers perform more and more tasks, or even take them over.
Trucks that can drive along in platoons, like a set of train carriages.

The possibilities fascinated me.
How múch we would gain by making our roads safer, and our traffic more easier and more sustainable!

In the past two years, I made a kind of journey.

I have visited projects, spoken with representatives of EU countries actively involved in innovation and visited car manufacturers in both the EU and the United States.
I've driven in at least six different self-driving cars and two platooning trucks. [And I'm still here to tell the tale!]

<u>What do we see?</u>
- Every single automobile manufacturer now markets cars with driver-support functions.
- All brands are now developing autonomous cars.
- As we speak, the first self-driving people-mover – the WEpod – is making its first trial runs on public roads in the Netherlands. Without steering wheel, pedals or even driver!
- Last week we organized the first cross-border truck platooning event. Platooning trucks made by six different manufacturers drove from six different European countries to Rotterdam. The first step has been taken!
- And a recent update by Tesla Motors means that cars can now be equipped with an autopilot without having to go to the garage. We're seeing the focus shifting from engines to software.

In short, the market is <u>hyperdynamic</u>.

This affects us all.
And it <u>confuses</u> us.

We are now at the <u>transitional stage</u> where you, I and everyone else has lots of <u>questions</u>.

Some are <u>general</u>:
- What can we do with all this innovation?
- What is the government doing, and the market?
- How will the consumer respond?

And some are <u>practical</u>:

For example, who is liable if a car is driving itself? How do we manage the road access of selfdriving cars? When the accent moves from engine to software, how do we organize the type approval?

Today I'd like to discuss the uncertainties and the possibilities with you. I want to show you that there are opportunities for us all and that we have a role to play.

First: opportunities.

And I think of opportunities to make our transport safer.
Every year, road accidents claim the lives of 1.2 million people worldwide. In the EU, that figure is 25,000.
That is the same as three Boeing 737s crashing every week!

90% of these accidents are caused by human error. Which is where a self-driving car makes a big difference. It doesn't get tired, or distracted by the children on the back seat, or look at its smartphone.

Secondly, I think of less congestion: If 10% of all cars were equipped with an adaptive cruise control system, there would be 30% fewer traffic jams! Imagine the time that would save!

And thirdly, the opportunity to get cleaner/more efficient vehicles.
There are huge gains to be made in terms of fuel efficiency and emission reductions. Platooning trucks use 10% to 15% less fuel.

There are more opportunities.

Take accessibility: Self-driving transport systems make large groups of people more mobile. Like the visually impaired, the elderly and people with a disability.

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And think of new public transport concepts. At the moment, some buses run only once an hour. Self-driving transport systems present far more opportunities for customisation, for better services at lower cost. This is very interesting for the scarcely populated areas of the EU.

I'm sure you've recognised issues for which you're seeking answers, and you can decide for yourselves which opportunities would help you best.

What's more, the EU can be more competitive.

We have strong automobile and ICT industries. And we want them to stay strong. The same trends are unfolding in Asia and the United States. But in America, access to the market is difficult, with rules and regulations differing from state to state.

The EU can take the lead if we move forward together.

What can we do?

I see at least three key issues that need further elaboration. We will discuss each of them later this morning. I'll just mention them briefly:

1. Smart investment in digital infrastructure

Cars need to be able to communicate with each other and with road-related infrastructure. How can we do that as smartly as possible, without needing an update at every border?

How can we avoid different kinds of investments in different countries, or even double investments, like investments on the road and in-car: think only of speedwarnings: do we still need those on the road, if in-car information is available?

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Secondly: towards compatible regulations

Our regulations are also ripe for an update. They still differ too widely. Take the compulsory distance between vehicles.

In Belgium and France it's 50 metres, in Germany it's two seconds and in the Netherlands it's 'a safe distance'.

And until recently, the Vienna Convention on Road Traffic stipulated that:
'Every driver shall at all times be able to control his vehicle or to guide his animals.'

An amendment to the convention entered into force last March. The role of the driver may now be taken over by an automatic system. But only under certain conditions. And these are open to interpretation. Let's not all do that separately.

And thirdly, we have to focus on: learning by doing.

A lot of questions can only be answered by real experiments, in real traffic-situations.

Take security, for instance: how do we prevent someone hacking a self-driving car and taking over the wheel?

And who owns the data? Data on road accidents, weather conditions or road works, for instance. How will the role of the road authority change? What will the government do and what will be left to the market?

My message is that we will be doing ourselves and our citizens a huge service if we take up the challenge together.
This is not a call for standardisation and harmonisation: because that's not stimulating innovation-spirit. But let's create space by deregulation, and let's work for systems which are compatible.

Many countries within the EU are already active. Some member states, for example, are now drafting codes of practice for testing self-driving cars.

But we are working too much in isolation. We are each addressing the same problems and identifying the same opportunities. We are making far too little use of the power of cooperation within the EU.

Let's learn from the past. What will happen if we don't work together?

Europe's railways are a good example. They were built separately in each country. There are more than 20 different safety systems. The Dutch system uses 1,500-volt direct current, Belgium 3,000 volt, and Germany 15,000 volt alternating current.
Billions now have to be invested to create one universal system.
I say to you: Let's make a better job of it!

Today I want to work with you to address the challenges and to take a meaningful step towards a more coordinated approach to connected and automated driving.

A joint Declaration is a first step. A Declaration in which we – the EU member states, the European Commission and car manufacturers – agree joint goals.

These are:
a. to facilitate the introduction of connected and automated vehicles by 2019;
b. to bring together developments in connected and automated driving.
c. to create an interoperable framework within which connected and automated vehicles cross borders seamlessly in the future; and
d. to support innovation in connected and automated vehicle technologies to strengthen the global market position of European industry.

I am not asking every EU member state to take part straight away.
We each move at our own speed, but we can learn from the steps others take. So let's learn by doing.

Let me conclude.

My message to the European Commission is this. Smart mobility calls for close, clear coordination. At this moment, at least four DGs are working on this issue. It's great that there's so much interest in the subject. But let me share a thought: with a single coordinating Commissioner, the follow-up would probably be much more effective.

My message to the Member States is: Let's take up the challenge together; let's show the world that we are ready for the future.

My message to the European Parliament: It is very important for you to be involved at this stage, to share your ideas, and work with us. It will take courage to openly address a development that has more to do with deregulation than with regulation.

And my message to the market players is this. Seek alliances, including with the telecommunications and automotive industries. Make sure that systems are compatible. Let's not have a situation where we need a new update at every border!

We are moving.
Initiatives are being launched to achieve more coordination on this issue.
But a broad foundation is still missing.
A strong, political signal that gives all parties the confidence to invest in smart mobility.
Together we can lay the foundations.
Of an EU that creates space for connected and self-driving mobility.
An EU that works together to seize new opportunities.

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And an EU that facilitates a new era of mobility!
I sincerely hope we will take that step today!

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