

**Inauguration of the Maison
des énergies renouvelables
Brussels, 22 March 2006**

Your Royal Highness,
Prime Minister,
Honourable Members,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Tomorrow European leaders will agree, I hope, to the European Commission's proposal for a new energy strategy for Europe. So I am particularly delighted to inaugurate, this evening, the Renewable Energy House.

First let me express my support for the promoter of this initiative, Prince Laurent: if the Renewable Energy House exists today, it is thanks to **your** personal commitment. It is an excellent example of your tireless efforts in favour of sustainable development. I am also delighted to share this honour with Guy Verhofstadt. We will be working together tomorrow at the European Council for a European energy policy that is equal to the expectations and needs of all Europeans.

Europe needs an energy strategy which balances three objectives: tackling climate change, guaranteeing the competitiveness of the European economy and ensuring long-term security of energy supplies and. To put it another way, the Kyoto, Lisbon and Moscow triangle. That is why two weeks ago the Commission proposed, in a Green Paper, a new European strategy for sustainable, competitive and secure energy. There are clear parallels between the three objectives of our policy and the three “E”s at the heart of Prince Laurent’s vision - Economic activity, ecology and equity. And I agree on the importance of balancing all three.

I would like to pick out on two elements of this new European energy strategy of which this House is a shining example: the use of renewable energies and increased energy efficiency.

Renewable energies are an essential part of Europe’s energy for today and tomorrow. They can help Europe reach the three challenges of sustainability, security and

competitiveness. To promote them, the EU has set clear targets: raising the share of green energy from 6% to 12% of energy consumption and boosting the proportion of green electricity from 14% to 21%. But there is a risk that we will not achieve these targets. But we cannot afford to fail. So we must act now. And we must look further ahead, to reinforce our ambition for renewable energy. The Commission's energy strategy proposes a series of actions to enable Europe to meet its targets – and go beyond them.

Europe is a world leader in the development of renewables. It *must* and it *can* retain and reinforce this position.

This house is also a model of the better use of energy – in our jargon, energy efficiency. Again, this is a central part of our new European strategy. We aim to achieve 20% energy savings by the year 2020. Words alone will not bring this about – we need action. The European Commission is determined to set an example: our headquarters at the Berlaymont has been designed

to be energy efficient, like the house we are in today. And the Commission adopted last week a plan to increase the percentage of our employees using public transport and reduce the number using their car to come to work. The Commission must take a lead. But every European organisation and citizen can play their part: if we control our energy consumption now, we will be preparing and providing for the future.

Let me conclude. Thank you, Your Royal Highness, for this initiative. I hope that this House will become a key forum in Europe for promoting renewables. We must work hand in hand to accelerate the change in Europe to a low carbon economy. We greatly need grassroots European initiatives of this type, and we hope they will grow in number.

Thank you for your attention.