

MAC-Summit - Welcoming Address

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- Welcome address to participants, representatives of member states (EU and representatives from countries outside Europe), European Commission, stakeholders and companies.
- Austria, holding the current Presidency of the European Union, is proud to host this important meeting which has become an international forum where policy makers meet with technology developers and car manufacturers to exchange views and develop strategies to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from mobile air-conditioning.
- Three years ago, at a meeting in Brussels, this body discussed options and future concepts for mobile air-conditioning, the state of the art of alternatives and possible ways of implementing car air-conditioning systems with a better environmental profile.
- At the end of January, agreement was reached between the Council and the European Parliament on a Directive which will reduce emissions of fluorinated gases from mobile air-conditioning systems. It will eventually phase out fluorinated greenhouse gases like HFC134a from this application.
- This new directive (which has to be implemented by all member states) will form a key element for Europe's strategy to achieve the Kyoto target and it will direct the development towards sustainable alternatives.
- Since the inception of Kyoto Protocol, Austria has always played a leading role in climate protection. This commitment is reflected in a very ambitious reduction target of -13% of greenhouse gases. In 2002, the Austrian Federal Government adopted a Strategy for Sustainable Development. This strategy addresses different policy sectors, citizens, institutions and societal groups like NGOs. In the same year Austria passed a regulation which sets out reduction and phase out targets for fluorinated greenhouse gases in all fields of application. In this piece of legislation the idea of phasing out fluorinated hydrocarbons from MAC applications was expressed for the first time.
- In regard to the introduction of new technologies in the automotive sector Austria has always been in the forefront. I should also remind participants of this meeting that 20 years ago Austria was one of the first countries in Europe (the first?) that introduced the obligation to equip cars with catalytic converters in order to reduce air pollution.
- On the European level, Austria has always been supportive to a phase out of HFC134a because MAC-systems using alternatives to fluorinated greenhouse gases are already available or in a state of development close to market introduction. Those alternatives have already proved very effective from a technical and economic point of view and are regarded as more environmentally friendly than system employed at present.
- With the agreement of the MAC-directive Europe has shown leadership, both, for the protection of the global climate, and for the application of innovative sustainable technologies.
- This workshop can therefore be regarded as the starting point for the implementation of this directive.
- I wish to thank all government representatives that were involved in the negotiations of the MAC-directive as well as all stakeholders for giving important input and active support which in the end helped to find this important compromise. – Wish success to the summit.