

Speech Antwerp Diamond Day
7 juni 2010

你好 **Nihao** (Goedemorgen)

欢迎大家到世博会比利时馆 **Huanying dajia dao**
(Welkom in het Belgische Paviljoen)

The quality of a diamond is defined by the four C's: Clarity, Carat, Color and Cut. If we would try to define Antwerp as the world diamond capital in keywords, we would end up with 'Location, Concentration, Innovation and Creativity'.

Antwerp is **located** in the centre of Europe, at the crossroad between east and west and is the home of diamonds for more than 550 years. This multicultural, "neutral" region is known for her high quality of life and houses all the key players. This **concentration** of miners, traders, people of industry, retailing and many others makes Antwerp the most important diamond trade centre in the world.

The economic capital of Belgium has an annual diamond-import and export of over 42 billion US dollars. More than 80% of the world's rough diamonds, 50% of the cut diamonds and 40% of the industrial diamonds are traded here. The diamond sector accounts for 8% of the total export of Flanders and 5% of Belgium's total exports. This makes the industry our number 1 export product outside the EU. Because it is such an important ambassador the province owns the largest Diamond Museum in the world. Some of her most precious pieces are shown here.

How successful can half a square mile be?

Therefore ladies and gentlemen, there is no better day to begin the Antwerp week with than Diamond Day. Antwerp loves diamonds and diamonds love Antwerp.

And luckily China loves diamonds too. The China Daily newspaper reported just last week that the Diamond Corner in this pavilion is a must see. We are proud and grateful for this good report in the Chinese press.

But there is no reason to gloat. As they say 'Pride goes before a fall' and 'standstill means decline'. Therefore we must keep on investing in our existing strengths and resolve our weaknesses.

That is why I have challenged AWDC to deploy an ambitious vision for the future. Together with all key players in the industry AWDC will present 'Project 2020' in the nearby future.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Charles Darwin once said that it is not the strongest nor the most intelligent of the species that survives. It is the one that is the most adaptable to change."

I agree with this, although I would replace the word 'adaptable' to 'innovative'.

Innovation should be part of every future-plan, for each sector in our economy. Belgium's workforce is highly trained and one of the best educated in the world. This advantage combined with high standard technology is the reason why the most difficult and precious stones are cut in Antwerp.

To keep that strategic position we should and will increase our investment in innovation and smartly commercialize the spin-offs and findings to become more competitive again in processes that today are dependent on manual handling. In the internet era product and process innovation won't be sufficient!

Ladies and gentlemen,

That leaves the fourth keyword: **creativity**.

For some years now Antwerp is home of some of the best fashion designers in the world. Their creativity inspires us all.

Also in diamonds one can be, should and is very creative.

There are no strict rules on colour, the amount of facets, the way to cut or polish... When manufacturers push the limit and let creativity take over, they can end up with brilliant result. The diamond I am wearing today is proof of this.

This stone is called 'Antwerp twin' and is thought of, polished and commercialised in Antwerp. A diamond to be proud of!

All of us should be proud of our diamond capital, and work – in a very constructive and positive way- from his or her perspective and function on the best possible conditions in which the diamond sector can perform best, in a very transparent way, so that it can continue to produce added value to the sector and the community.

One of those people working hard for the future of diamonds in Antwerp is vice-major of Antwerp Ludo van Campenhout. A special thanks to you.

I am convinced that by combining investment in innovation and working side by side on an ambitious vision for the future, Antwerp can remain what it is today and what it has been for the last 550 years:

The home of diamonds!