Address of Welcome

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have pleasure in conveying to you the best wishes of the Federal Government
and of the Federal Minister for Research and Technology, Dr. Heinz Riesenhuber;
we all hope that the MT SUMMIT II will be interesting for you and for the organizers.
In Hakone, I announced our intention to hold this convention in our old German
capital of Berlin; but our efforts in this respect were not successful; I am therefore
happy to welcome you to the Bavarian capital - which is in fact frequently called
Germany's secret capital and - with regard to the weather - shows its best side, today.

The Federal Minister for Research and Technology supports work in the fields of
MT and computer linguistics for three reasons:

1) Machine translation systems require computer linguistics research and
   development in the analysis of the source language, in transfer and Interlingua
   problems and in the generation of the target language. R&D results must lead
   to software developments, which can then help to realize the translation. Ana-
   lysis, transfer or Interlingua and generation are directly connected with basic
   linguistic questions and the related basic research. Computer linguistics, software
   development and basic linguistic research are a complex R&D field. The object
   of research is the still enigmatic structure of human language and of individual
   languages in the field of tension between practical handling in translation and
   theoretical knowledge and profound understanding. It seems to be expedient
   therefore that at the MT SUMMIT II, MT suppliers and leading computer linguists
   together attempt to present and explain to the translators the state-of-the-art.
   Considering the increasing internationalization and globalization of scientific,
   economic and cultural developments, the BMFT feels it is his task to make a
   supportive contribution to this R&D field.

2) The BMFT supports R&D, it does not, however, support commercial MT systems because this is the task of industry, which is also responsible for commercialization. Provision of government support in this field would always contort competition, In addition, translators and their representatives fear that the use of MT systems might take their jobs away. This fear is understandable - against the background of a general reservation about computers - but, in my view, it is irrelevant at the present time. And it is very unlikely to materialize in the future for the following reasons:

   a) The demand for translations is increasing in many areas at an above-average rate, in particular with regard to long technical texts and manuals.

   b) Machine translation systems will always be developed further in order to make ever better translations, which will not, however, be perfect for a long time into the future. Pre- and post-editing of such machine translations will always call for the translator. However, translators - and rightly so I think demand a certain quality standard of machine translations, since pre- and post-editing must not, of course, take longer than direct translation by the human translator.

Here, the complex semantic problems, which have not yet been solved satisfactorily play an essential role; the human translator will always be better than any machine. For this very reason, it seems important to me that MT systems be used to support translation. The exhibition provides you with quite a comprehensive survey of systems which are either already on the market or in the development stage.

3) The BMFT also provides support for scientific and technical information including its dissemination via electronic data bases. Owing to the existence of worldwide telecommunications networks, this information market is a world market par excellence, in which buying and selling of information is a matter of seconds. This world market demands that data bases be offered in the English language; it has become almost general practice for German information products such as the Beilstein data base and physics or mathematics bibliographic data bases offered in the STN Network. The German language, which was once the leading language

science, has been replaced by the English language after the First and Second World Wars. Of course, we also face translation problems in this field when establishing or using such data bases, and here MT systems might acquire a new significance. However, to put it somewhat pointedly, the computer and the English language have a particular affinity for each other, which the German language and the computer do not have. For this reason and on account of the scientific, economic and cultural position of the Federal Republic of Germany, another concern of the Federal Government is that the German language be included in MT systems, at least in the language pair German-English, but in future preferably also in other language pairs.

These are the main ideas behind our promotion activities, which will be explained in detail in the Panel II. In conclusion, I wish the SUMMIT II every success and continuation in two years. Thank you.