

Thank you Mr President,

I would like to begin by congratulating the award winners and project managers. It is for me a great satisfaction to grant this award and share with you this event: the ITEA 2004 award ceremony.

Similarly, I would like to thank you, on behalf of the Andalusian Regional Government, for having chosen our region to host this event and, if you would allow me, to congratulate you for your choice.

I hope that during your stay here you will be able to see first-hand that Andalucía is a region where visitors are always warmly welcomed ... following and honouring our hospitality tradition, our history and our culture.

Furthermore, today in Andalucía there is a special sensitivity for the topics dealt with and discussed in this technological Forum.

Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity of having with us here in Seville the representatives of the leading European companies in the field of telecommunications, car manufacturing, consumer electronics and information technology. As such, allow me to explain to you that the Andalusian Government supports innovation as the main strategy to continue transforming the social and economic situation of our region.

Today Andalucía is fully aware of the fact that innovation is the one and only way to guarantee progress, wealth, good quality jobs and social welfare.

In consonance with this principle, the Andalusian Government decided to merge in the same department all policies related to university, research, communication and information technologies, as well as industrial and energy development.

Our goal is to create a new culture in which all these stakeholders interact and work together, a new culture which fosters the growth of a new Andalusian innovation system that will be the driving force of our development.

We firmly believe that if the Andalusian society as a whole fully supports research and technological development initiatives, we will succeed in reaching the crucial pace needed in order to converge with the most advanced regions in Europe.

Thus I truly hope that this meeting is the first of many, a way to establish contact in order to open new partnerships between our region and this relevant group of European countries.

I would also like to express and offer our will to participate in any project or initiative undertaken by this Association, either by bringing our expertise to other regions or by jointly carrying out new projects.

Thank you very much. I wish you all a pleasant and fruitful stay in Andalucía.