

Good morning et Bienvenue Madame le Commissaire Viviane Reding, Monsieur le Ministre Marc Verwilghen, Monsieur le Ministre Zsolt Nagy, Monsieur le Ministre André Santini, Ladies and Gentlemen and welcome to the fourteenth Global Forum /Shaping the Future. It's good to see so many familiar faces! It is a great pleasure for me to welcome each one of you and I thank you all for joining us this morning in this majestic and historic Palais d'Egmont - a site where history has been written and a centre of European diplomacy.

A special thanks to the Belgium Federal Government coorganizer of the Global Forum this year, within the context of the 175th anniversary of its independence and the 25th anniversary of the Federal State, who offers us the privilege to hold the Global Forum in the Palais d'Egmont.

When looking back on fourteen years of successful networking, it seems to me, that such an historical place represents the best environment for the Global Forum, which brings together - each year - so many different industry and political leaders, organizations, countries, cultures, and viewpoints to cooperate.

This year again the Global Forum brings together more than 300 high-profile delegates, including both industrial leaders and senior policy makers, from about 30 countries. And once again, the Global Forum wants to prove to be much more than just another ICT-conference, but a real networking event connecting practical applications and innovative ideas – but first and foremost people sharing and shaping perspectives on the future of our Information and Knowledge Society.

This year's Global Forum takes place under the topic "The Broad convergence – Act II". Some of you might wonder, if we run out of topics... Definitely not, but there have been so many new evolutions and trends in the field of convergence between telecommunication and information technology, that we considered it worth to devote another Global Forum to this hot topic.

Convergence is about the collapse of different technology, equipment and services into a set of common and ubiquitous technology, equipment and services. The challenges emerging from such collapse are immense. Just to specify some of the questions to be answered:

What about regulation of service provision and consumer policy considerations?

What about security and privacy?

What about technical bottlenecks?

How convergence impacts public service delivery, electronic services provision in general and the quality of life of each of us?

What about content in a converging environment?

These and other questions will be addressed during the coming two days and I look forward to interesting discussions and debates - during the sessions but also in a more relaxed atmosphere during the breaks in the beautiful Salle des Tapisseries, lunches in the magic Galerie des Glaces and the Gala dinner tonight at the Musées Royaux d'Art et d'Histoire preceded by the visit of the Art Nouveau and Design exhibit.