

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear friends,

I am especially pleased to see you again today for the opening of this edition of the Euromediterranean Energy Efficiency Forum which, year after year, continues to make its mark as a key event.

I would like to thank our partners from Johnson Controls and the Climate Group, as well as my Foundation's teams, who thanks to their hard work have helped to make this event such a success.

I do not want to be too lengthy and therefore will simply put forward a few ideas based sadly on a lucid observation: despite the tremendous benefits they offer, energy efficiency improvements remain in many respects the poor relation to energy transition.

While projects for developing new sources of energy or for improving the environmental impact of the ones that already exist abound, we have to admit that those focusing their efforts on energy efficiency are few and far between. Faced with this situation, it is our duty to alert our contemporaries about this key issue.

How can we achieve this? I would like to focus on two arguments that I believe are particularly pertinent: the first being the immediate benefits and the second the shared dreams.

At far as the immediate benefits are concerned, I feel that the economic aspect is a decisive factor. I am convinced that this is how - particularly in a Europe experiencing slower growth - we will find ways of turning the spotlight on everything energy efficiency promises to deliver.

It is in fact a constant: in times of uncertainty, the solutions offering clear economic prospects are more readily applauded.

We can see this in a negative way with the offensive launched today in several countries of Europe in favour of the exploitation of non-conventional hydrocarbons. What is the main argument put forward by those who advocate this solution, even though the risks are known? Growth. Despite the proven harmful effects of such technology, its promoters succeed in generating interest, even hope, by promising a decisive impact on growth...

Consequently it is in order to meet this requirement, this aspiration of the people living in the Euromediterranean region to return to growth and employment, that we need to demonstrate to them the prospects, this time positive, of energy efficiency.

That is why we have chosen to focus the fourth edition of our Forum on the economic growth potentials of energy efficiency. We have to show our concerned contemporaries that energy efficiency is today the only prospect which, as far as energy is concerned, is beneficial for the environment, conducive to progress for the populations and has strong potential for creating jobs that cannot be relocated.

But the economic approach cannot achieve everything. Although it can prompt a reasoned agreement, it will never be able to create an important momentum unless it is accompanied by the notion of a dream or a challenge.

This challenge has to be technology. It is by making energy efficiency not simply a defensive solution, but also a true change in our relationship with energy, that we will generate the hope it deserves.

Showing the economic benefits of energy efficiency and sharing the challenges that govern it: this, I think, should be our line of action to give this tremendous potential at last the visibility it needs today.

At a time when the future of our Planet is subjected to significant threats, at a time when energy-related strategic issues appear to be more controversial than ever before, above all at a time when Europe is struggling to find the mainsprings of new economic growth, this is an objective which we should target together. In this way, we will make energy efficiency a genuine source of shared hope for our Planet.

As Victor Hugo wrote, "Nothing is more powerful than an idea whose time has come. »

The time for energy efficiency has come today. That is why I would like to thank you all for being here and to ensure you of my support and my attention, at the onset of work which promises to be as exciting as it is essential.

Thank you.