

Brussels, 23rd February 2016

Farewell: Nearly a decade on the road to sustainable mobility

Dear members, NGV friends and partners,

Having dedicated nearly a decade to Natural Gas Vehicles, it is time to move on and take up a new professional challenge. I will leave the position as Secretary General of the NGVA with great sadness and a lot of confidence at the same time having had the pleasure to work for and represent one of the most exciting industries and topics in sustainable road transport. Looking back, I joined the NGVA as its first employee in the foundation year 2008 and worked a few years from the Madrid office, before building up the Brussels office in 2010. Having had a handful of founding members, NGVA has been growing to nearly 150 companies and associations from across the NGV sector. Today, NGVA is more proud and stronger than ever and I am grateful that I had the privilege to play a role in creating this basis for further success. During my time, we have helped to build a lasting policy framework for natural gas vehicles, which cumulated in the Directive 94/2014/EU on deployment of alternative fuels infrastructure (DAFI) and a mandate to build refuelling stations and spur the market for CNG (Compressed Natural Gas) and LNG (Liquefied Natural Gas) vehicles. We still don't know the final results and how the member states will transpose the Directive, but the market for NGVs will continue to expand, it has to, if Europe wants to be serious about 60% GHG reduction by 2050. If I try to think about other achievements, I would have to mention the integration of NGV projects in the Connecting Europe Facility and the TEN-T policy. Actually, the majority of innovation and clean road projects has so far been linked to natural gas vehicles being the closest technology to the market.

The great benefits when using natural gas as a vehicle fuel in terms of low air quality, noise and climate emissions have convinced me since my first day with NGVA and remain undisputed. Gas is extremely flexible and the future for CNG and LNG will be further enhanced by more blends of natural gas with biomethane and synthetic natural gas.

But I also think of the manifold challenges our industry had to face in the past years, first and foremost the Commission proposal on reviewing the Energy Taxation Directive and increase of taxes on natural gas as a vehicle fuel, which fortunately and – let me add – thanks to the strong efforts at persuasion by NGVA – did not happen. But we have to remain attentive, the discussion on fuel taxation will come back and we should position natural gas as the best immediately alternative to petrol and diesel by at least 2030.

Looking ahead, the EU and in particular member states need to make up their minds how serious they want to be regarding sustainable mobility and a real change to alternative fuels – without CNG and LNG it will not happen, a level-playing field is still missing. All alternative fuels and technologies are needed, but the NGV technology offers by far the most mature solution with the broadest product offer of cars, vans, buses and trucks available today. I am convinced that natural gas is the pathway to hydrogen, CNG and electric vehicles will become more important in cities and new developments will include the hybridisation of the natural gas combustion engine. However, a little bit less focus on e-mobility and a much stronger role of “g-mobility” would help the debate and Europe!



“3-C’s” will remain essential in today’s road transport debate **Credibility, Competitiveness and Comparability**. I hope to see that the EU will introduce CO2 credits for blends of renewable and natural gas. **Isn’t that the ultimate objective of the EU – to create fair market conditions?**

The potential of NGVs is tremendous and I have been missing some honesty in the debate, I am certain that the great success of NGVs in Europe is yet to come – i.e. 15 million vehicles by 2030. It is time to embrace to full potential of CNG cars, buses and trucks. LNG trucks and ships will change the face of HDV and marine transports substantially in the near future – all of it makes transport cleaner, better and more affordable. The integration of more renewable methane in the mix will remain a challenge, as long as the EU would be continuing to request action from the industry without offering something in return. The future of low carbon mobility has many faces and Europe simply can’t afford to put all hopes into a battery.

“3-C’s” will remain essential in today’s road transport debate, Credibility, Competitiveness and Comparability. I hope to see that the EU will introduce CO2 credits (similar as for EVs) for blends of renewable and natural gas. Isn’t that the ultimate objective of the EU – to create fair market conditions?

I wish the NGVA and team good luck, we shall meet again on the road to sustainable mobility in my new role at the International Road transport Union (IRU) as its General Delegate to the European Union.

Best regards,

Matthias Maedge