

**Opening speech by Hugh Richardson**  
**3 December 2008 at 13:45**  
**At Pacifico Yokohama Conference Centre, 5<sup>th</sup> floor**

Good afternoon Ladies and Gentlemen,

What the French philosopher Michel Foucault wrote is particularly pertinent in today's world: "*Power is not a possession but a relationship*". In a changing world characterised by the globalisation of knowledge - research, innovation, education - international cooperation is becoming essential for competitiveness.

Globalisation of research and innovation are putting a new emphasis on the role of regional clusters and the need to further their development. The external dimension to the European and Japanese S&T agenda is therefore not a soft or marginal option, but essential and practical for EU and Japan interests which can only achieve their objectives at home by being more cooperative on the global stage.

Clusters are seen as key drivers for competitiveness, innovation and regional development.

In Europe, they are being promoted through both national-level measures and EU-level support instruments, notably the 7<sup>th</sup> EU Research Framework Programme, the Cohesion Policy Funds and the Competitiveness and Innovation Programme.

In Japan, MEXT (the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sport, Science and Technology) and METI (the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Industry) have been promoting the "Knowledge Cluster Initiative", "City Area Program" and "Industrial Cluster Project" for the reinforcement of the international competitiveness and development of regions.

In Europe and in Japan, we are trying to facilitate the emergence of world-class clusters. To this end, linking with other clusters on the international level, building on complementarities in order to strengthen worldwide leading position, acquiring access to targeted markets and know-how, exchanging of information and experience, establishing networks in special technology or application fields, and improving international visibility, are all essential.

As firms – including SMEs – internationalise their activities, it is important that cluster initiatives and organisations which support them internationalize too. Changes in the global economic environment are making cluster international linkages even more important.

The EU-Japan Regional cluster Forum has precisely the objective to foster cooperation between research and innovation regional clusters in Europe and in Japan, and increase our mutual awareness on cluster policies, development methods and management practices.

More than 40 representatives of European Clusters from 14 European countries are here today in Yokohama. Around 80 face-to-face meetings between European and Japanese clusters were organised. It is the first time that such an EU-Japan event is organised to stimulate and facilitate the global outreach of European and Japanese clusters. By working together in a win-win

cooperation and opening more to each other and to the world, Japan and the EU stand the best chance of becoming vibrant knowledge economies of wealth creation.

To conclude, I would like to add that this is even more important today as we are faced with a substantial international financial and economic crisis which can be expected to have profound economic, political and social consequences. These consequences, some of which are unpredictable, and the unknown duration of the crisis make long-term planning very difficult.

But the global nature of many challenges ahead of us requires well coordinated response at global level. It means also that the internal and external dimensions of our research and innovation policies must be effectively linked. The current crisis calls for more international cooperation, not less.

It reminds me of something Alan Turing, one of Britain's most famous mathematicians, once said: "*We can only see a short distance ahead, but we can see plenty there that needs to be done*".

There is certainly plenty that needs to be done. But let's do it together, Europe and Japan. Only that way will we realise our mutual ambition of a peaceful, environmentally sustainable and prosperous world.