

## **Address by Amsterdam City Alderman Frank Köhler (responsibe for Traffic, Transport and Infra-structure)**

at he West-Indisch House,  
Monday 19 June 2000

Ladies and gentlemen,

on behalf of the mayor and council of Amsterdam – and the board of Vélo Mondial 2000– welcome to the Second World Cycling Congress. And a very warm welcome to this reception. It is good to see you here. And, your presence is also a tribute to the organisers. It was not an easy task – but they succeeded.

Indeed, in the age of virtual reality and the Internet, they have been motivated by the fact that – for most activities - people still leave their home. And, while distance is often not a problem, most trips are within your own town or village. We have just had a very good lesson on this in Amsterdam. Last month, Europe's largest internet cafe opened in our city centre. It has 650 places and it is doing very good business. An excellent example of New Age communication in action? -certainly. But how do most of its customers get there? By bike or on foot! That is very encouraging.

But there is still plenty of potential to increase the cycling in the local transport picture. As experts, you know that using the bike increases the distance you can cover. And it means you can carry a bigger load. That saves valuable time for other activities.

The picture becomes even more interesting when we look at car journeys. About half of all car journeys are under 7.5 kilometres. That is 30 minutes on your bike. And cycling is a very realistic alternative to about half of these short car trips.

In our own part of the world the bike can also boost potential for InterCity routes by public transport.

- *Firstly* – it is easier for people to get to the station or bus stop - and at the other end, to their final destination.
- *Secondly* - it is good news for public transport companies as it increases the number of people that can reach their stations and bus stops.

Over the next four days you will be looking at these subjects and working out details and solutions. I will give you a small warning. Be careful of the “romance of the bike”. Be practical, and let heads rule your hearts. That is the way to get governments to agree.

It is also the first step to a Cycling Master Plan. The solid basis for development, policy, and projects around the bike, in every country and in every region. In plain language this means showing the authorities the benefits of cycle traffic. It means getting these authorities to encourage the use of the bike - by making it easier and more attractive. And, perhaps most important, a Cycling Master Plan convinces governments to allocate funding. Last but not least, the plan clearly sets out who is responsible, and the time-target for the job must be finished.

My feeling is that we should be working towards targets in the year 2010.  
Good luck, good cycling and thank you very much.