

Word of welcome by the mayor of Amsterdam Schelto Patijn

Amsterdam, 19th June 2000

On behalf of the City Government of Amsterdam, I would like to extend a cordial welcome to all of you. Undoubtedly, you've already been exploring the city these last few days. So you must have the impression that Amsterdam is one of the most sportive cities in the world. Which mayor can say that his (or her) city, hosts two international sporting events at the same time: the European football championships and the Velo Mondial 2000.

We welcome Velo Mondial 2000 to Amsterdam, a city well suited for this important event for many reasons. The 16 million inhabitants of the Netherlands have 16 million bikes. That is an average of one bike per inhabitant. (To compare: China has an average of 2.6 inhabitants per bike, on a total of 450 million bikes).

On the inner court of the Amsterdam Historical Museum there is a special exhibition of photos taken by Dutch photographers who took pictures of Chinese cyclist in Beijing, and of Chinese photographers who took pictures of cyclists in Amsterdam. I recommend a visit to the museum.

Another interesting figure is that in the center of Amsterdam 50% of all movements is done by bicycle. I like to cycle myself. I do the shopping by bike and together with my wife I visit friends, theatres and the Concertgebouw by bike. In the weekends many citizens cycle to the countryside. By bike it takes 15 minutes to reach the typical flat 'polder-landscape' with its green pastures, from the city-centre.

Many Dutch citizens use the bicycle also to get to their work. The city-government promotes the use of bikes. Amsterdam values a good cycling-policy. In addition to the positive effects on health and city-environment, this policy also pays off in economical term, as you will be shown during the session on Thursday. The benefit of investments in cycling-infrastructure can be twenty times as high as the money invested. This is the case for cities as Bogota, Delhi and Morogora in Tanzania. Even in Amsterdam, with its already great bicycle-infrastructure, new cycle-tracks and bike sheds contribute highly to our city-economy.

I invite you all to the reception in the West-Indieshouse tonight. You will be transported to the reception by boat through the canals. (I apologize for those who had been so eagerly looking forward to **cycling** to the West-Indieshouse.)

Finally, I would like to congratulate the Dutch Cyclists' Union *Fietzersbond* with its 25th anniversary. I think it has been a good idea to organize this meeting..I wish you all an informative and fruitful conference. May you have a pleasant stay in our beautiful city.