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International Hop Growers' Convention IHGC

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**Technical
Commission**

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Mr. President, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me cordially welcome you at today's Technical Committee meeting. This time France is our host country, we are in the city of Strasbourg. This former free city in the Holy Roman Empire is presently not only an Alsatian metropolis of scholarship and cultural heritage but at the same time the official seat of IHGC as well as a center of Alsatian hop-growing area.

Alsatian hop cultivation is mentioned for the first time in 1796. Since the end of the 19th century it has grown in importance and by the beginning of the World War I the cultivated area covered 6000 hectares. All the time the hop-growing business in this region has been closely connected to Alsatian beer industry, although a large part of the production has been exported to countries all over the world. In 1939 Senator Urban, by coincidence my namesake, who was a hop-grower himself, took the initiative and united 363 growers in one professional organization with an ambition to promote the Alsatian hop all over the world and increase its competitiveness. Furthermore Urban wanted to protect the hop-growers' profession and to guarantee an optimized risk management.

The financial and economic crisis that started last year has affected not only hop-growing and hop-trade but also economic system all around the world. The situation grew even worse due to large hop and alpha productions of last year. Today almost all breweries put pressure on suppliers to ensure lowest prices of brewery raw materials.

All of us are then faced with a problem to produce enough of good quality hops with the lowest costs possible. This topic has become a focus of reports presented during today's Technical Committee meeting.

First we are going to hear a report from America where the area where dwarf trails are used has grown significantly. This system helps to reduce production costs even though there are not so many cultivars suitable for this way of growing (except for England). Yet the proportion of costs and harvest appears to be more favorable than in the case of classic hop-fields. Today even some other countries aside of the USA

and England have their experience with this type of growing (China, the Czech Republic, Bulgaria and others).

We seek for ways to reduce the man-power share for one hectare of hop-fields. This is a topic of the second report presented by Mr. Johan Porter. He is going to report on testing of automatic hop-wires hanging, which contributed significantly to cost reduction in hop-growing.

The third report from Slovenia deals with an issue which has been of prime importance in recent years and that is global warming and its influence on hop-growing in Slovenia. I think that results presented in this report can be applied to the whole central European region as we could see namely in years 2006 and 2007.

The last one will be topic from New Zealand, presented by Kim McGlashen – Hops with a Difference.

I do believe that today's meeting of the Technical Commission will be very interesting and useful for your work.

In closing I would like to wish you a very nice stay at the 52th IHGC Congress and successful hop-picking in your home countries in the season of 2009.

Ing. Jaroslav Urban
chairman of TC IHGC