

Text adapted from UK Prime Minister David Cameron's meeting with the European Automobile Manufacturer's Association, London, 9 June 2011.

Ladies and gentlemen,

this is the first time the European automobile manufacturers have held their meeting in the UK, and I'm delighted to welcome you here.

It's been a very good week for the industry here in the UK. I've had a look at the latest Mini to come off the production line in Oxford; this iconic brand has been a huge success and we're beginning to see them all over the rest of Europe, not just in the UK. We're very proud with the fact that now Britain is a large exporter of cars; if I'm not wrong 70% of what we produce we export. It's very much part of our ambition as a government to rebalance our economy. We became too reliant on housing and financial services. We want to see more manufacturing, and I'm delighted that so many automobile manufacturers are actually opening up production plants in the UK. We want to do everything we can to encourage that. We've established a Fund which is assisting many of the businesses you represent. We are investing in advanced technology and innovation centres. We are also massively expanding the number of apprenticeship programmes.

Now, obviously we know there are lots of issues and problems that we need to overcome together. There are the challenges of meeting environmental targets; there's the challenge of making sure those environmental targets are set realistically and sensibly. There is also the whole issue of free-trade agreements. Now, we are a passionately free-trade country. We believe one of Britain's great advantages is our openness, is the ease of trade, the ease of import and export. And we're in favour of free-trade agreements but we understand the concerns that some of you have about how these free-trade agreements are put in place, and we want to listen very carefully to the views you have.

I think we have a lot to discuss this morning. As I said, you're very welcome. You're in a country that really wants to see its automobile industry increase; you're in a country that wants to see, if you like, a new re-industrialisation in terms of more production. We are determined to help your industry succeed, and we're very happy to host this meeting today and have a proper exchange on all of these areas.

So thank you very much indeed for coming.