News Release

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM

COMMITTED TO IMPROVING THE STATE OF THE WORLD

Unlocking Europe and Central Asia ' s Potential

26 May 2011

Yann Zopf, Associate Director, Media +41 (0)79 329 3500 E-mail: yann.zopf@weforum.org

- Innovation is seen as the key driver of growth and regional competitiveness over the long term
- The region needs to ignite its distinct culture for early stage innovation and focus on building scale
- Europe can lead the world in energy and resource efficiency; this would be a huge competitive asset

Vienna, Austria– The World Economic Forum on Europe and Central Asia concluded in Vienna with a call to action by business and government leaders to expand the frontiers of innovation. The meeting was co-hosted with the Government of Austria, bringing together more than 500 leaders from business, government, academia and civil society from over 67 nations.

Bozidar Djelic, Deputy Prime Minister for European Integration of Serbia, stressed the importance of the regions human capital. " The most valuable assets in the region are not oil, gas or metals but people. " The challenge is to retain the most qualified and mobile talented people in a truly global war for talent. Europe and Central Asia ' s rich cultural and scientific foundations have much to offer young entrepreneurs and scientists, but the region can do more to attract talent.

" Europe will have to speed up the way it innovates, " said Connie Hedegaard, Commissioner, Climate Action, European Commission, Brussels. Europe and Central Asia ' s competitors around the world are moving at a much faster pace. Given that the region cannot compete on labour costs, taxes and demographics, its competitive asset is to become the world ' s most energy- and resource-efficient economy.

Innovation will also help resource-rich countries move up the value chain and diversify their economies, said Kairat Kelimbetov, Minister of Economic Development and Trade of Kazakhstan, and Co-Chair of the World Economic Forum on Europe and Central Asia. " Kazakhstan is investing in centres for science and engineering with partners like GE, and sponsors thousands of students to attend the best universities in the world every year. "

Jim Hagemann Snabe, Co-Chief Executive Officer, SAP, Germany, and Co-Chair of the World Economic Forum on Europe and Central Asia, outlined the need to ignite a distinctly European culture of innovation. " Without innovation countries and companies cannot survive in the long term. " Europe ' s diversity generates many great early stage innovations and generational ideas but the ability to scale is lacking. The region needs to foster an environment where entrepreneurs and small businesses can thrive while ensuring that platforms are in place to support them in building scale.

To exploit the region ' s innovation potential, European and Central Asian countries need to cooperate regionally, as people, markets and infrastructure projects span frontiers. Enhancing human capital policies, improving access to finance for entrepreneurs and promoting excellence will all help the region increase the pace and scale of innovation.

Notes to Editors

- View the best pictures from the Forum on **Flickr** at http://wef.ch/pix
- Watch sessions on demand on **YouTube** at http://wef.ch/youtube or http://wef.ch/youku
- Become a fan of the Forum on **Facebook** at http://wef.ch/facebook
- Follow the Forum on **Twitter** at http://wef.ch/twitter and http://wef.ch/livetweet
-

Check in with the Forum on **Foursquare** at http://wef.ch/foursquare
- Read the **Forum Blog** at http://wef.ch/blog
- Read Forum reports on **Scribd** at http://wef.ch/scribd
- Follow the meeting on iPhone at http://wef.ch/iPhone
- **Upcoming** Forum events at http://wef.ch/events
- Subscribe to Forum **News Releases** at http://wef.ch/news

The World Economic Forum is an independent international organization committed to improving the state of the world by engaging business, political, academic and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas. Incorporated as a not-for-profit foundation in 1971 and headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, the Forum is tied to no political, partisan or national interests (www.weforum.org).

The World Economic Forum is an international institution committed to improving the state of the world through public-private cooperation in the spirit of global citizenship. It engages with business, political, academic and other leaders of society to shape global, regional and industry agendas.

Incorporated as a not-for-profit foundation in 1971 and headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, the Forum is independent, impartial and not tied to any interests. It cooperates closely with all leading international organizations (www.weforum.org).

WORLD ECONOMIC FORUM
World Economic Forum, 91-93 route de la Capite, CH-1223 Cologny/Geneva
Tel. +41 (0)22 869 1212, Fax +41 (0)22 786 2744, http://www.weforum.org