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2010 Annual EUCAR Conference: Volkswagen Group Research gives presentation of EU Commission HAVEit research project

Wolfsburg / Brussels, 8th November 2010 – Prof. Jürgen Leohold, Head of Volkswagen Group Research and a member of the EUCAR Council, today presented Volkswagen's HAVEit research vehicle to the EU Commissioner for the Digital Agenda, Neelie Kroes. The HAVEit (Highly Automated Vehicles for Intelligent Transport) has been developed as part of the European development project of the same name. EUCAR, the European Council for Automotive Research and Development, represents the joint research interests of the thirteen largest vehicle manufacturers in Europe and enjoys direct contact with the European Commission and Parliament.

"As ninety percent of serious accidents are caused by human error, Volkswagen regards the HAVEit project on enhanced vehicle safety as one of key importance," stressed Professor Leohold at today's unveiling of the research vehicle. "Volkswagen has therefore developed a TAP (Temporary Auto Pilot) system, which on motorways and similar roads at speeds of between 0 and 130 km/h provides the optimum degree of automation for the driver based on the driving situation, analysis of the surroundings, the driver's condition and the system status," explains Leohold.

Future development of driver assistance systems is targeting greater pooling and automation of different functions. The aim is to use automatic driving functions to prevent or minimise the consequences of accidents caused by driving errors made by an inattentive or distracted driver in monotonous driving situations, such as driving in traffic jams or on long-distance journeys. With automatic vehicle control the system takes over forward and sideways guidance of the vehicle for a certain period of time and in specific situations. By virtue of the automatic forward and sideways control drivers can take their hands off the wheel and let themselves be chauffeured. However, they have to constantly monitor the system. Whether they are doing so is tracked by the driver condition recognition system, which uses both direct (monitoring eyelid movement) and indirect (monitoring steering movement) means of detecting tiredness.

The use of fully automatic, driverless vehicles such as 'Stanley' and 'Junior', which were shown by Volkswagen at the 2005 Darpa Grand Challenge and 2007 Urban Challenge as technological beacons of the future, is undoubtedly a long way off. Use of highly automated driving functions monitored by the driver, such as the TAP system, could, on the other hand, be one of the very next evolutionary steps in driver assistance systems.

The European HAVEit research project began in February 2008 and runs until July 2011. Working together on the project are 20 companies from the automotive and supplier sector, plus a number of research institutes.

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