**Check against delivery!**

***umati* – universal machine tool interface ready to rise to the next level**

**Statement by Dr. Wilfried Schäfer, Executive Director of the VDW (German Machine Tool Builders' Association), Frankfurt am Main, at the *umati* Web Press Conference on 2 April 2020**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In these troubled times I am delighted to welcome you to this web-based press conference – a new format for us, too. METAV 2020 was scheduled for 10 March, but, as you all know, the corona crisis has forced us to postpone both the event and the accompanying press conference by one year. However, we have been making such great progress with *umati*, which you know as “the standard data interface for machine tools”, that we didn't want to keep you waiting until METAV 2020 "reloaded" next March. And that is why we have decided to update you on the latest developments now.

**Developments since EMO Hannover**

As I'm sure you remember, we had our big live demonstration at EMO Hannover last September. The broad-based and active participation of a total of 70 partners from ten countries reflected the great interest in our initiative. In our showcase, 110 machines and 28 software services were distributed throughout the exhibition grounds and visitors were able to see for themselves how they were networked. They were able to track the data from the machines in real time.

Since then there has been a further significant and highly positive increase in the response to the *umati* initiative. The number of new partners from a wide range of industries – both German and foreign – is rising every week. We currently have almost 120 partners who are keen to collaborate with us on disseminating the standard interface. We are naturally more than pleased to note this dynamic increase in such a very short time.

Before I now go into more detail about the standardization activities, I would like to point out that we have to differentiate: on one hand, *umati* as a brand and label stands for a community that has joined forces to promote a standardized interface. On the other hand there is the actual OPC UA standardization for machine tool manufacturing. In the past, this was not always communicated precisely enough.

*umati* provides a framework for joint marketing, public relations work, the demonstration of use cases and addressing end customers. And when we talk about standardization in OPC UA, we will in future always mean the latest version of the OPC UA Companion Specification for Machine Tools.

With the work on this OPC UA specification we have again made good progress. We have made further improvements to the interim Companion Specification used for the EMO showcase. After EMO Hannover, the relevant working group of the OPC Foundation internally circulated a second draft of the specification. Just last week, a third internal draft was released.

You may recall that we set up a "Joint Working Group" within the OPC Foundation at the beginning of 2019. This paved the way for an official, structured review process in which all interested companies can participate. This working group is continuously refining the specification. Despite all the uncertainties surrounding the pandemic, our goal remains to release the first final version in the summer or autumn. That will be almost exactly three years after we first presented the initiative to develop a standard interface at EMO Hannover 2017. This represents an extremely short time window for such a complex undertaking involving so many global partners – something which we are more than a little proud about. However, it also shows the magnitude of the demand among manufacturers for such a standard interface between machine tools and higher-level IT systems.

**Next step towards international publication**

Nevertheless, there is still a lot to do until the final version of the specification is ready for publication.

We are currently working on the publication of the "Release Candidate". This is the first publicly available draft of the specification that will be issued by the OPC Foundation. Once released, the *Machine Tool Specification* will be available to the international public and can be commented on by experts worldwide. The Joint Working Group is currently working intensively on preparing the necessary documents for the OPC Foundation. Despite the challenging circumstances, we are holding to our schedule of publishing the Release Candidate in April.

Once the Release Candidate has been accepted, there will be no further obstacles in the way of publishing the final *OPC UA Companion Specification for Machine Tools*. At that point things will really take off because all interested companies can then launch their own projects and their first products.

However, some of the constraints under which we work have changed since EMO Hannover. We will have to adjust our schedules accordingly. The large number of trade fairs which have been postponed as a result of the corona crisis prevents us from running live showcases at present. In addition, the challenging economic environment is making collaboration difficult. The partners are being forced to adapt their resources to the new situation. Nevertheless, this will not prevent us from continuing to work hard.

At the same time, an *OPC UA for Machinery* specification is also being developed. This is a basic specification for the entire mechanical and plant engineering sector. Mr. Rauen will explain this to you in detail in a moment.

We have aligned the schedule for publication of our final *Machine Tool Specification* with the schedule for the release of the *Machinery Specification*. This allows us to build on the *Machinery Specification*, and ensures that no adjustments will be necessary at a later date. It means that we will probably be able to publish our final specification in late autumn.

Regardless of the review process of the specification, we expect to see the first actual products that provide connectivity based on the OPC UA Specification for Machine Tools to be available in the second half of this year. This optimism stems from the fact that some companies are already incorporating the standard interface in pilot projects and are offering it to their customers. It is therefore even more important for our partners that the development of the *umati* community follows this roadmap and provides strong visibility and perception. Our partners are eager to present their first applications.

**The next steps for *umati***

But what will be the next concrete steps for *umati*?

Unfortunately, it was not possible to present the *umati* demonstrator, in our case the based on implementations of the OPC UA Companion Specification for Machine Tools, at METAV 2020, nor will it be possible at any other trade fair in the first half of this year. However, we assume that you will see a first showcase of the growing *umati* community at the AMB in Stuttgart from September 15th to 19th with products that have implemented the *Machine Tools Specification*. The current Covid 19 pandemic, of course, means that it is impossible to predict whether AMB Stuttgart will actually take place this year. But even if not, many of the necessary adaptations to the existing *umati* demonstrator were already available by the original METAV date in mid-March. For example, the dashboard and the data hub, which we implemented with the Telekom subsidiary T-Systems, had to be extended to make the demonstrator applicable for the entire production equipment. In any case, you will also be able to monitor the progress for yourself at the METAV 2020 reloaded, rescheduled for 23 to 26 March 2021.

But we are also thinking beyond the German and European borders, of course. From the very beginning, we were committed to encourage global participation in the *umati* community to spread the standard. It goes without saying that only standards which are internationally recognised are actually standards in the true sense. To this end we ran a live demonstration at the Metalex in Thailand last November. And so, as you can see, we are holding to our original internationalisation plans. Showcases are currently planned at trade fairs such as the Simtos in Seoul, which has been postponed to October, and at the CCMT in Shanghai, although no new date has yet been set for this.

Ladies and Gentlemen, *umati* is exactly what the market needs right now, and the VDW Executive Board is proud to have launched a project that lays the foundations for a sustainable, long-term initiative. We are delighted by the powerful and encouraging response we have received from all over the world. And we are also impressed by the strong interest being shown from outside the machine tool industry and its direct clients.

Such cross-sector and cross-technology interest is maybe not so surprising, as most companies' production facilities contain not only machine tools but also an individual mix of different machines, equipment, robots and systems. If all these technologies can exist in a common ecosystem which is ideal for producing plug-and-play solutions, this saves end users a lot of time and money. A common interface therefore holds great potential for new projects which had previously not been cost-effective. And to make it known to the world, a powerful community is needed: *umati.*

For this reason we have decided to join forces with the VDMA to put *umati* onto a broader footing. As an association for the entire mechanical and plant engineering industry, the VDMA brings together all the necessary competencies from robotics to software. We also cooperated closely and effectively on the OPC UA standardisation. And that is why we are particularly pleased that the VDMA, for its part, is also keen to advance the initiative together with the VDW. This means that *umati* is now changing from *universal machine tool interface* to *universal machine technology interface*.

I would now like to hand over to Mr. Rauen who will explain what motivated the VDMA to adapt *umati* as *universal machine technology interface* in respect of value chains and from a customer perspective.

Thank you for listening!