**Check against delivery**

**Statement by Dr. Wilfried Schäfer, Executive Director of the VDW (German Machine Tool Builders' Association), Frankfurt am Main, Germany, at the METAV 2022 opening event for journalists on 21 June 2022 in Düsseldorf**

Ladies and Gentlemen

A very warm welcome to METAV 2022. We are delighted that the METAV is finally about to open its doors – and so, welcome to this, the 22nd International Exhibition for Metalworking Technologies, here in Düsseldorf.

When you entered the exhibition center today, you saw something that has not been witnessed in Düsseldorf for a while now: exhibitors from various technological fields of metalworking setting up their stands, machines and exhibits. They are here to present their products and solutions, their innovations and their know-how. They are keen to reconnect with their customers – face to face and not just digitally.

More than 180 exhibitors from 16 countries will be showing their innovations, products and services here in Hall 16 until Friday. After Germany, other major exhibiting nations include Italy and Switzerland. The main focuses of the event are on machine tools, software for production and production planning, measuring devices and machines, clamping and cutting tools.

The number of exhibitors can be viewed both positively and negatively. In comparison to the current figure, more than twice as many companies registered for METAV 2022 originally – despite the event having been postponed, cancelled and run in digital form in the past four years. However, many companies have found it difficult to keep pace with the latest pandemic-related developments from March to June in the current year. Their schedules were already too tightly packed with different trade fairs, in-house exhibitions and other events. You, yourselves, are having to cope with the large number of events right now. We, for one, are pleased that so many companies have nevertheless decided to come to Düsseldorf this week.

Order trends in recent months reveal a great demand for investment in industry. By April of this year, orders had risen by a further 37 percent on top of the already very strong previous year. The rises in demand are more or less evenly matched in Germany and abroad. And that is why we are convinced that our exhibitors will encounter customers who are keen to buy this week, and that there are very sound prospects for doing good business. We are expecting participation levels to return to normal in time for METAV 2024, as the industrial environment in and around Düsseldorf continues to offer great potential.

Seen in this light, 2022 is anything but a normal business year for the METAV. This is also the reason why we have decided to dispense with the usual opening press conference, and to move this event into the exhibition hall itself and focus on the two topics of innovation and start-ups instead.

For more than 40 years, METAV has been bringing metalworking experts together here in the heart of Europe's largest industrial conurbation.

The spotlight here is not only on the managers and purchasers from the key customer industries, but above all on the men and women actually operating the machines. They are often the first in the company to recognize potential areas for optimization and to realize when new solutions are called for. That's why they and their expertise are so valuable when it comes to making purchasing decisions.

METAV offers a compact overview to help them in this. Exhibitors of all sizes will be showcasing the full range and creative power of production technology.

You will recall that we launched the Additive Manufacturing, Medical, Moulding and Quality areas in 2016. Each of these areas is, of course, being affected by the factors I outlined earlier. That is why we have decided to combine the individual areas into one joint stand. Content-wise, this has proven an effective solution because the different technological fields complement and cross-fertilize each other in industrial practice. Additive manufacturing, for example, has become an integral part of medical technology and is increasingly finding its way into tool and mold making. Measurement technology as used in quality assurance is becoming an essential aspect in all fields of metalworking.

We are now taking our commitment to the next generation of entrepreneurs to a new level. We will be visiting the joint stands F10 and F22 together afterwards: these two stands feature a total of 13 start-ups from Germany, Austria and Switzerland. Their founders decided to leave their familiar working environment within the last ten years and to strike out on their own in order to develop their innovative ideas independently. They have correctly identified the METAV as a platform that can help young companies gain a foothold in the market and provide attractive framework conditions to help them grow their business.

Together with the Federal Ministry of Economics and Climate Protection (BMWK), we are offering support to these young German businesses. We are also launching a platform specially for international start-ups. Some of these companies will be showing their product and process innovations to a larger trade audience for the first time.

Of course, our commitment to the next generation of entrepreneurs is not an end in itself. Start-ups are an important source of inspiration for the established names in our industry and are set to exert an important influence on engineering in the future. Cooperating with young technology companies enables established providers to develop new products and business areas in a short space of time using innovative methods – far away from traditional structures and procedures, and while keeping risks at a manageable level. This can give them an important innovative edge over the competition.

Our aim in launching this initiative is to provide a platform where all interested parties can get to know each other and explore areas of potential cooperation – which is by no means a foregone conclusion for start-ups. Finding the right partner, developing a suitable basis for mutually beneficial collaboration, and then anchoring it in a sustainable form are factors that need to be carefully considered.

That's why I am delighted that three of our exhibitors have agreed to present their new ideas to you. After that we will take a short walk to the Start-up Area, where you will have an opportunity to find out more about them. And so, a warm welcome now to the representatives from Blue-Lub in Neuss, Quantolux in Kleve and Tr8fin in Speyer.

But before I hand over to them, I would like to thank you all for coming and wish you a rewarding few days full of fruitful discussions and inspiration here at the fair.