

Interview in Just-Auto

INTERVIEW: CLEPA CEO Lars Holmqvist ahead of ASEAN conference

By: Simon Warburton | 4 May 2011

Europe's Association of Automotive Suppliers (CLEPA) CEO Lars Holmqvist is leading the European Commission (EC) automotive delegation negotiating a free trade deal with ASEAN countries.

Holmqvist - currently in the Indonesian capital of Jakarta where the free trade talks are taking place - took time out before dinner to outline his thoughts to Simon Warburton about the importance of the negotiations for Europe's vehicle industry.

j-a: What is your role this week in Jakarta?

LH: I am here with the European Commission [EC] in Indonesia on a trade delegation trying to negotiate a free trade agreement with ASEAN. I will be leading the automotive delegation - there are [companies] from Louis Vuitton to Perrier - I am the one from the automotive industry.

j-a: Why are these talks so important for the automotive sector in Europe?

LH: We have to find a decent agreement with ASEAN as this [region] will be an important part of our market in the future. China is so big and so dominant.

j-a: How confident are you a deal can be struck and in what time-frame?

LH: There will be an agreement reached, but it might take some time with India. The Indians have a totally different idea about what is a level playing field. The EC [has] parallel negotiations with the Indians - it is going very, very slowly.

j-a: What influence does the automotive industry have in a delegation such as this?

LH: The automotive industry is always an important part of the trade agreements. Time after time, we find out this is one of the key points when it comes to trade agreements. We are always very concerned we are getting unfair treatment in Europe because all of those [markets] want to have free access to the markets in Europe.

Of course they don't want us to have the same access to their markets as they say "we are a developing market" and you have to help us.

j-a: What part will you be taking in the talks?

LH: I am talking in the summit meeting tomorrow [Holmqvist will be addressing ASEAN delegates at the Open Dialogue with Business Leaders session that aims to discuss bringing together the policy dimension of trade and investment with business perspectives from both sides].

Following his return to CLEPA headquarters from Jakarta to Brussels next week, Holmqvist will outline to *just-auto* some details of what the ASEAN conference discussed.

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