

Press release

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The Robotics Industry is looking ahead with confidence to 2010. Increasing sales since 3rd quarter 2009

Frankfurt, 18 February 2010 - The IFR Statistical Department presented the results of the IFR Quarterly Statistics on Industrial Robots on Thursday in Frankfurt. In 2009, the number of sold units worldwide slumped dramatically by about 50% compared to 2008, one of the most successful years. But as of the third quarter sales figures have been improving.

“2009 was the most challenging year for the worldwide industrial robotics industry. 2010 will again be a demanding year for our business, because the realization of the necessary projects of our customers will take a long time. But I am convinced that finally, the AUTOMATICA in June 2010 in Munich will give essential impulses for new investments in automation.” commented Åke Lindqvist, IFR President, ABB, USA, the figures.

Main impulses coming from Asian emerging markets

In the first quarter of 2009 the global sales of industrial robots nose-dived dramatically caused by the worldwide financial and economic crisis. Mainly the orders from the automotive industry were cancelled or postponed. After a further decrease in the second quarter, the sales of industrial robots started to increase from the 3rd quarter 2009 onwards. The main impulses for the slow recovery came from the emerging markets in Asia, especially from China. Also in North America, the sales were increasing since the third quarter. In Europe, the recovery started only in the fourth quarter. The IFR forecasts that only in 2012 the number of sold robots will come closer to the level of 2008.

“After six years of consistent growth of Japanese automobile manufacturers investment, the slump of economy revealed huge excess of the production capacity. This hit Japanese robot suppliers very hard. The recovery slowly started in the third quarter but it would take a few more years to come back to the level of early 2008 in Japan”. stated **Junji Tsuda, IFR Vice President, Yaskawa/Motoman, Japan**, on the situation in Asia:

Better outlook for a recovery

Tsuda continued: “New investment mainly goes to new manufacturing system for hybrid electric cars and new models for lighter and environmentally gentler cars. Automobile industry in China has shown strong growth and investment has been consistent even in the harsh economy outside China. This is expected to last at least another couple of years. Investment in Southeast Asia seems to be coming back. Recovery of robot industry in Asia in 2010 is promising but speed is unpredictable.”

Dr. Andreas Bauer, Chairman of the IFR Robot Suppliers Group, KUKA, Germany, added: *“We are confident the worldwide increasing sales numbers in the last quarters of 2009 are the start of a recovery also in Europe. Robotics and automation is still one of the fastest growing industries of the last 20 years. I am sure the worldwide mega trends like sustainability, expanding industrialization and demographic shift will push the robotics industry for many more years.”*

Situation in North America

“From an order intake point of view we can report that in the second half of 2009, robotic orders in North America showed noticeable improvement of over 9% over the first half of the year. Largely responsible for this encouraging showing was a very strong 3rd Quarter.” stated IFR President Lindqvist, additionally, who is also member of the Board of the North American robot association RIA.

He continued: *“This improvement is not surprising in view of an improving manufacturing sector and we feel cautiously optimistic this trend may continue. The consumer demand for automobiles in North America is still difficult to predict though. Very encouraging on the other hand is the uptick in unit figures for life sciences/pharmaceutical/biomedical orders, which actually recorded an impressive 43% increase for the year 2009. In conclusion we feel that the situation outside of automotive is definitely improving, and automotive is stabilizing. We are looking forward to 2010, though still challenging, and sense that the corner has basically been turned in North America.”*

The **International Federation of Robotics** was established in 1987 in connection with the 17th International Symposium on Robotics, as a professional non-profit organisation, by robotics organisations from over 15 countries. Since 1970 an International Symposium on Robotics is organised every year on a different continent, in a different country and another city. The Symposium is systematically organised in conjunction with an International Robot Exhibition.

The purpose of the International Federation of Robotics is to promote research, development, use and international co-operation in the entire field of robotics to act as a focal point for organisations and governmental representatives in activities related to robotics.

The IFR is hosted by VDMA Robotics and Automation.

The **IFR Statistical Department**, which is hosted by the VDMA Robotics + Automation association publishes two studies World Robotics every year. In 2009:

1. World Robotics 2009 Industrial Robots:

This unique publication presents comprehensive global statistics on industrial robots in uniform tables allowing consistent country comparisons. It contains detailed statistical data for some 40 countries, broken down by application areas, industrial branches, types of robots and by other technical and economic variables. Data on production, exports and imports are presented for a selection of countries. Trends in robot densities, i.e. number of robots per 10,000 persons employed in relevant sectors, are also featured.

2. World Robotics 2009 Service Robots:

This unique publication presents comprehensive global statistics on service robots, market analysis, case studies and international research strategies of service robots. The study is evaluated in cooperation with our partner the Fraunhofer IPA, Stuttgart, Germany.

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