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It's just happened ...

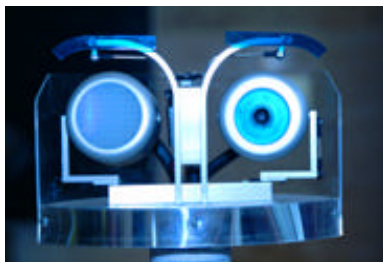
A Robot in Every Home?



On the occasion of the release of the *World Robotics* publication for 2004, prepared by the UNECE in cooperation with the International Federation of Robotics (IFR), a conference entitled *A Robot in Every Home?* was held in the Palais des Nations on 20 October, with chief executive officers from

companies in United States, Germany and the Republic of Korea. An opening address was given by the European Union. As hands-on illustration of the issues presented in the Conference, an Exhibition of Service Robots was also organized, featuring vacuum cleaning robots, lawn mowing robots, home robots, guide robots, guard robots, to mention just a few of the applications. The Conference was timely also because it was exactly 50 years ago that the first patent was filed for an industrial robot, although it was then called “programmed article transfer”. The first industrial robot was installed and put into operation some 40 years ago. Since then close to 1.5 million general purpose industrial robots have been sold.

For some years now another type of robot has emerged. Service robots for professional use in non-manufacturing environments, such as underwater robots, surgical robots, space robots, and bomb disposal robots are rapidly growing in importance. Well over 20,000 service robots for professional use are now in operation, with an additional 50,000 units expected to be put in service over the next five years. A second category of



service robot, those for domestic home use, was the focus of the Conference. The UNECE estimates that there are already at least 1.3 million service robots for home use – from vacuum cleaning robots, lawn mowing robots to toy and hobby robots – with an estimated 6-7 million units to be added in the next five years.

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