

STATEMENT II

Michel Thonney, Skipper of «sun21»

An outlook on the voyage of «sun21»

First stage, sailing down the Rhine to Rotterdam, where «sun21» will be loaded on a cargo vessel bound for Cadiz, avoiding a rough crossing of the Bay of Biscay at this time of year.

Mark, the boat's constructor, and I will have our work cut out after it is re-launched at Cadiz. We shall have to test «sun21»'s navigational capacities, adjust the electronic instruments, check the technical equipment, and finally go over the safety and life-saving items, not forgetting the things we are bound to have left behind, such as the tin-opener, the no. 12 spanner and the corkscrew.

The real starting point of the expedition will be Seville, in Andalusia, the place from which Christopher Columbus set sail. We shall descend the Guadalquivir, then head for the Canary Islands, where we should make landfall after six days at sea. This will be a real test of the capacity and performance of the electric motors, given the unpredictability of the sunshine.

We plan to call at Lanzarote and Tenerife in the Canaries. We shall then set a course for the Cape Verde Islands or, to be more precise, for Mindelo on the island of São Vicente.

Just after New Year's Day 2007, «sun21» will set off on her crossing of the Atlantic, a challenge feared by some, warmly embraced by others. A voyage of 2,150 miles, or 3,900 kilometres, between 16 and 14 degrees of latitude north of the Equator in the tropical zone. We shall have a guest whom we very much want to stick around. For us, she is a real object of worship. I mean, of course, the sun!

The weather conditions at this time of year are generally good. The trade wind should be blowing us along at between 3 and 5 on the Beaufort scale, creating waves 2 to 3 metres high. Conditions may vary, of course, and force 7 winds accompanied by 5-metre waves are a possibility. Three weeks later, if our guest is cooperative, «sun21» should arrive at Martinique.

After a few days' rest and recuperation, we shall sail north, then north-west, via Dominica, Marie-Galante, Guadeloupe, Antigua, St. Martin, then the British and American Virgin Islands. We shall then be among the Greater Antilles, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic, christened Hispaniola by Christopher Columbus.

«sun21», or rather her crew members, will have to be on their metal, because boats sometimes take quite a battering when hopping between islands. We refer to it as «going through the mill».

The Bahamas will be the last group of islands we encounter before the United States, where we should reach Miami at the end of March 2007. We shall then have a further 1,800 km to sail before arriving in New York, mostly on inland waterways. The temperature will be a mere 18°C, with 2-metre tides like the ones we left behind in Spain.

End of the adventure! Thanks to our guest of honour, the sun, this amazing ball of fire, and the energy it radiates.