

Speech by Director General, Soren Haggroth

Distinguished delegates, Ladies and gentlemen,

I am very honoured to have been invited to this Second World Urban Forum and say a few words at this opening session.

Together with my South-African colleague at that time Mrs. Sankie I chaired the First World Urban Forum in Nairobi in May 2002. The idea was to find a more informal way to focus on the Urban challenges. The key word was dialogue. Some 1200 people met in Nairobi, now 6000 people have registered for the Second Urban Forum. It is an impressive number and it shows that the problems and possibilities of urbanisation is gaining an ever increasing attention on the global agenda. I am fully convinced that also this Second World Forum will be as open, as informal, as democratic and as inclusive, as it was in Nairobi. I am glad to hear that a Third World Urban Forum is already being planned to take place in Vancouver in 2006. In a way the Nairobi Forum was a historical in creating a new way of international co-operation, outside the UN protocol, but inside the main stream of the world challenges.

The theme of the First World Forum was sustainable urbanization. In my speech for the closing plenary session. I summarized the discussion by focusing on three fundamental issues relating to sustainable urbanization. These were.

Poverty alleviation
Gender balance, and
Good governance.

The urban poor are often deprived of the most basic public services, as well as facing severe problems of shelter and tenure. Self evidently this is the very antithesis of sustainable urbanisation.

Women suffer the most from these deprivations, and, all too often, their problems are compounded by the abuse of their fundamental human rights. Again there can be no sustainable urbanisation where these circumstances pertain.

Good governance at every level and especially at the local level, is vital need, decentralization, representative democracy effective community leadership financing, partnership with local stakeholders, these were some of the key principles that we formulated concerning good governance in Nairobi.

This Second World Forum is focused on issues related to inclusiveness and integration. Inclusion of the poor, inclusion of both men and women, institutional and financial structures for urban management are to my opinion important. I am glad to see that these aspects of integration will be taken up during this Second Urban Forum.

Finally, allow me to make a few personal comments concerning the theme of this Second World Urban Forum.