



World Urban Forum 4 Closing Session

Nanjing, 6 November 2008



The Private Sector at WUF4

Closing remarks presented by Cédric Baecher, Senior Executive, Veolia Environnement



On behalf of the private sector representatives, I would like to express our gratitude to UN-Habitat and the Chinese authorities to have welcomed us at the occasion of this Fourth session of the World Urban Forum, here in the historical City of Nanjing.

Corporate Social Responsibility is one of the greatest challenges facing corporations in today's world. By aligning our business activities with social and environmental concerns, in a mutually beneficial manner, we do have a significant role to play to facilitate a sustainable urbanization, improving the overall quality of life and access to basic services for all citizens, in close coordination with local and national governments.

Yesterday, a consultation meeting of private sector companies committed to corporate responsibility collectively examined ways of improving urban living conditions, in order to bring our contribution to achieve harmonious cities.

We discussed responsible business practices for sustainable urbanization, as well as the core principles required to face this critical challenge.

We also discussed affordable technologies and innovative business models that can work for the urban poor, at the bottom of the economic pyramid, so that cities and towns are safer, healthier, more equitable and also in a better position to welcome the development of new economic opportunities.

The new climate change paradigm has triggered a new focus on innovative technologies and other ways to do business that will lead to the usage of less resources and higher outputs, with fewer emissions.

This new paradigm demands a new way of doing business:

- *Current market systems need to be pushed towards the creation of not only economic, but also social and environmental value, for an optimal impact at both local and global levels.*
- *A new framework, based upon sound business practices, is needed to regulate and foster a sustainable growth.*
- *An increased development of partnerships and mutually beneficial collaborations, e.g. to foster further investments into research and the development of innovative solutions in relation to the main activities that drive urban economies.*

While there are not quick-fix solutions in the market place, the effort to find optimal solutions taking into account local constraints should be encouraged.

This can be achieved by reinforcing our collaboration with all stakeholders, including the urban poor, to keep developing a precise understanding and intelligence of local situations.

This is a pre-requisite to be able to develop and sustain the market chain at the bottom of the pyramid, testing innovative business models and encouraging the use of a wide range of affordable and flexible technologies, at the service of local communities.

Under this process, we are bound to gain from lessons of optimal business productivity, commercial revitalization and enhanced social and ecological consciousness.

As a way forward, we jointly decided to establish two working groups.

A first group, dealing with "Bottom of the pyramid" approaches for urban sustainability, will examine sound business practices that may contribute to reach the urban poor.

A second group will focus on "Good urban governance", examining ways and mechanisms through which the private sector can work effectively in cities, with all the actors involved in urban development.

These two working groups will also examine the core business principles for sustainable urbanization.

Next year, in July 2009, the Habitat Business Forum will take place in New Delhi, India.

It will be an excellent opportunity to share the outputs of these two working groups, showcase successful solutions and technologies to achieve sustainable cities, and also give a new Habitat award to a selection of best practices connected to five key challenges:

- Affordable housing solutions;
- Sustainable water, sanitation, waste management and infrastructure;
- Clean urban energy, mitigation and adaptation to climate change;
- Innovative ICT solutions;
- Disaster mitigation and post-disaster reconstruction.

We, the private sector, look forward to pursuing our cooperation with the United Nations, bringing our contribution to achieve a balanced territorial development and progress towards a sustainable urbanization.

Thank you for your attention.

