



**Office of the UN Commissioner General
United Nations Pavilion, Expo 2010**
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Welcome Address on the occasion of the Ceremony of Handover of the UN Pavilion

ASG and UN Commissioner General, UN Pavilion
Dr. Awni Behnam

Expo Site, Shanghai, January 23, 2010

- Honourable, Director General HONG Hao
- Distinguished Deputy Director General, HUANG Jianzhi
- Distinguished Mr. Matthew ZHU, President of LVS Exhibition Service Co. (Ltd)
- Excellency M r. Zhou Jun , Director International Participants Department
- Dr Xu Bo , Assistant Commissioner general
- Distinguished representatives of the Shanghai Municipal Government and the Shanghai Bureau of Coordination
- LVS team, honoured guests, and dear Colleagues from the United Nations system

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen,

Let me first say how honoured we all are for your presence Mr. Director General and how grateful we are for the unparalleled support that you have extended to the United Nations and to other International Organisations participating in the Shanghai World Expo 2010.

As the Commissioner-General for the UN Pavilion, and on behalf of the Secretary General Mr. BAN Ki-moon, I wish to express our deep appreciation for this opportunity to meet you all at the handover ceremony of the United Nations Pavilion. I wish first of all extend my deep appreciation to the great construction workers of the People's Republic of China who built this magnificent Pavilion to their supervisor and engineers whose unmatched skills and ingenuity made this hand over possible and on time . To the staff of the Bureau of Coordination, Mr.Chen Jiang, Mr. Xu Xiaodong, and

the incomparable Ms. Chen Hua, to the Director of LVS Mr. Xue Liang and his able staff , and others whose contributions has been most valuable, I extend the sincere gratitude of the United Nations.

Last but not least to the UN Pavilion team from UN Habitat , the lead agency , under the leadership of the UN Pavilion Coordinator Lars Reutersward who have been working tirelessly with commitment and a combination of talent, vision, imagination, courage and wise council.

Dear Participants in this Ceremony

As we are in the UN home I cannot but think of our dear colleagues of UN staff who lost their life in the tragic earth quake of Haiti , I ask you in honour of their memory and all those who lost their life to join me in a moment of silent reflection .

Thank you

The “Better Cities, Better Life“theme of this Expo 2010 could not be demonstrated in a better city than in Shanghai a truly magical city, constantly developing and forever changing to the better.

The United Nations have not only great experience and initiatives to share on the urban challenge but also we will be here also to learn. In fact the value of the United Nations participation in the Expo 2010 resides in what we can learn from the experiences of our host country which has become a unique and shining example of how to meet the modernisation and urbanisation challenges, a remarkable example of betterment of urban life. Shanghai is now a model of coastal city, able to meet the challenges of the future.

However we need to be reminded that at this point in time, most countries have significantly urbanised, in a process projected to continue all through the middle of this century. Up to today, the percentage of the world’s population living in urban areas has, in fact, just passed the 50 per cent mark. With the creation of mega-cities (urban agglomerations over 10 million residents), the world's urban population is increasing by about 70 million people every year, which is equivalent to the creation of seven new mega-cities during the same period.

This Expo has been aptly described as the “Olympics of Development“, as this will provide a unique opportunity to seek global answers to the challenges of urbanisation and the impact of climate change where cities are also engines of growth, of economic and social inclusion.

The UN Secretary-General, in encouraging all agencies, international organisations and partners to participate in EXPO 2010 said:

“The United Nations Pavilion at Expo 2010, with the theme “One Earth, One UN”, will showcase the wide-ranging efforts of the UN system to help the world to achieve sustainable urban development. The exhibitions will display not only our knowledge and best practices, but also our unity of purpose advancing this crucially important agenda.”

The UN Pavilion will be an exciting experience. It will, for the first time, articulate the work of the United Nations on *better cities* and *better life* as ONE. From children health to sustainable development, from creative economy initiatives, to biodiversity conservation, the UN Pavilion will explore every aspect of the betterment of urban life in a way like no other pavilions have done before. Up to today, 33 Agencies and international organisations have registered their participation in the permanent exhibition. 25 of them have reserved additional temporary exhibition time, and 25 will hold events throughout the 184 days of the Expo.

I am convinced the Shanghai Expo 2010 will engage every one of us here and offers the United Nations System, Funds, Programmers, International Organisations and Partner's access to convey their own contribution to some seventy million visitors and another billion of online visitors

I cannot imagine a better moment in history and a better place, for the World Expo to show how cities and urbanisation can become the solution to the current urban problems. How urban development can progress in tandem with more equitable, more economically productive, and environmentally sustainable societies. We have a unique opportunity to exchange ideas and experiences with the entire world on how future cities can mitigate natural disasters, deal with health pandemics, yet remain as centres of creativity, education, culture, harmony, decent work and sustainable progress for all.

We are proud that six UN System Organisations have partnered with the relevant departments in China to conduct the six substantive Forums leading to the Summit, a clear indication of the extent of the commitment of the United Nations to this Expo.

The UN Pavilion we are receiving today which will open its welcoming doors in 97 days will be different. It will have numerous activities for the public and will, during the Expo period, serve as special place for high level events and celebrations of the UN family like the World Habitat Day on October 4th, the UN Day on October 24th and the commemorative days of all of the UN agencies, for which the UN Pavilion will house special day events, meetings and public activities that will engage the Expo visitor, making each visitor part of this “One earth, One UN” spirit..

When I look this magnificent Pavilion and think of the future, my heart aches to think that this beautiful blue house will be demolished at the end of the EXPO. How in my heart I wish that this house of the UN can still remain somewhere in China after the Expo as shining example of our lasting cooperation and a legacy emanating from a life-changing experience in working together for the happiness of all peoples ..

In conclusion and in the mean time what I and the UN pavilion team promise you is an unforgettable experience when you visit this pavilion as of 1 May.

Thank you

Dr. Awni Behnam
Assistant Secretary-General
United Nations Commissioner-General UN Pavilion
Shanghai World Expo 2010