

OPENING SPEECH

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Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

For the fifth time, I have the privilege to heartily welcome you all to Kalmar ECO-TECH. This time you come from 21 countries with all your valuable knowledge and experiences in research, education and technical/practical issues.

The main purpose of the conference is to exchange this knowledge of yours and discuss and promote research cooperation between us scientists and other expertise. Also, we will focus on trade and industry, particularly so on the situation in the Baltic Sea region and the Nordic countries.

I am most happy to have so many participants from remote parts of the world. This conference is a forum for interdisciplinary communication across different categories of professionals from many different cultures and this time we focus on issues within environmental engineering and environmental chemistry. Furthermore, we now also can offer a special workshop on Nanotechnology which is a new exiting area for research and development that becomes more and more important.

In December 2003, the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the years from 2005 up to 2015 as being the International Decade devoted to the Action programme: "Water for Life". What does the slogan "Water for Life" means for us living here in the Baltic Sea Region? I tell you that it means that we all shall have access to safe drinking water and that we shall stop the unsustainable exploitation of water resources and reduce the number of people who do not have access to basic sanitation. On top of this, we shall improve the treatment of waste water and improve the waste management and build up extensive networks in these areas.

By lending some slightly modified words from the United Nations' General Secretary Kofi Annan, I want to say that: "Together, we can, and must, provide safe, clean water, proper sanitation and adequate waste management to all the people here in the Baltic Sea Region".

The water resources is one of our primary lifelines for survival and for sustainable development, ever more so now in the beginning of the turbulent 21st century. Together, we must manage these resources better.

The new frontiers of knowledge of sustainability endeavoured by scientific investigation shall be quickly incorporated into future educational programs and be the main goal for future cross border cooperation projects. Future policies must be focused on the most relevant problems - that means ensuring the effectiveness - and select to solve these problems efficiently - that means ensuring the efficiency.

Therefore, during this conference, and for the future cooperation of ours, we shall have in mind the following topics:

- 1) The focus on water related issues on all levels;
- 2) How to implement new programmes and projects;
- 3) The Gender perspective, so to involve more women and make them more engaged in water and waste related development

If we promote these ambitions, we can give a positive contribution to the struggle for a clean enough environment and, by that, improve our common life quality primarily in a material sense. Finally, I do hope that everybody will do their best to bring back with them a fruitful experience of the conference and at the same time have a nice time together here in Kalmar.

Once again, please feel very much welcomed!