



Global Parliamentarians on **HABITAT**

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Global Parliamentarians on Habitat
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Speech

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The spoken word prevails!

GOOD LAWS FOR A BETTER HABITAT

- **Hon. Jerko Rošin**, President of the European Global Parliamentarians on Habitat
- **Hon. Luka Bebić**, President of the Croatian Parliament
- **Mr. Zvonimir Vrančić**, Mayor of the City of Zadar,
- **Dr. Ante Uglešić**, Chancellor of Zadar University

Excellencies,
Honourable colleagues,
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to wish you a very warm welcome, personally and on behalf of the Board of Directors of the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat. It gives me great pleasure to see that you have come to our Forum in such great numbers.

I would like to use this opportunity to say thank you to our host, the Croatian Parliament, which is represented here today at the highest level by Mr. Luka Bebic. Thank you, Mr. President Bebic, for giving us the honor of opening our 7th Global Forum in person.

My special thanks go to the city of Zadar. We would like to thank Mayor Zvonimir Vrančić and Deputy Mayor Drazen Grgurovic for their great hospitality. We are fortunate that we can hold our Forum in your city, a city which is so rich in culture, history and natural beauty. We have seen the pictures of the beautiful old city centre of Zadar.

I remember well how convincingly Drazen Grgurovic presented the city of Zadar on our last forum in March 2010 in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. After that it was easy to choose this unique city for our conference.

I would also like to cordially thank the Chancellor of the University of Zadar, Dr. Ante Uglešić, and his Vice-Chancellor, Dr. Srecko Jelusic, for their wonderful support. Your historic university is an excellent venue for our discussions.

I also thank the sponsors of Zadar for their valuable contribution to the success of this conference.

A very big thank you goes to my colleague Jerko Rosin, deputy in the Croatian Parliament and newly elected President of the European Council of the GPH, for his great commitment to the conference. He has prepared this conference together with an excellent team from the city of Zadar, the Croatian Parliament and the Croatian Government and in close cooperation with our Secretary General in Germany. Thank you very much, Jerko.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

The Global Parliamentarians on Habitat have already held Global Forums in Istanbul, Cancun, Manila, Berlin, and Rabat.

In March 2010, Rio de Janeiro in Brazil hosted our sixth Global Forum. I am pleased to be able to welcome our host of Rio, Eliomar Coelho of the Camara Municipal do Rio de Janeiro here today. Eliomar, welcome!

The Declaration which we adopted in Rio strongly shows the influence of our long-time President of the Board of Directors of the GPH and the current Alternate President of the Advisory Council, Oscar Lopez Velarde Vega. Thank you, dear Oscar, for having come to Zadar, and welcome!

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you know, the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat work together very closely with the United Nations. We are committed to sustainable urban development and to improving the housing and living conditions of the people not only in our countries but also worldwide. We are committed to the principle of sustainability as a cross-linking of environmental, social and economic claims. This is an ongoing task of policy, which we have to meet.

The theme of our conference is "Good Laws for a Better Habitat". In the next two days we want to exchange our experiences and develop solutions to the issues of "Climate Change and Coastal Cities" and "Legislators as Drivers of Change". The outcome of our discussions will be recorded in a "Declaration of Zadar" and carried into our national parliaments for implementation.

In addition, the regional councils of the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat for Africa, Asia, America and Europe have met today at the University of Zadar and some of them have elected a new leadership. I welcome in addition to the

newly elected European President Jerko Rosin from Croatia, the newly elected Asian President Ronald Kiandee from Malaysia.

I greet the President of America Senator Ricardo Fidel Pacheco Rodriguez from Mexico, who was appointed last year. Our African President Margaret Zziwa-Nantongo from Uganda wanted to come, but she had problems to travel to Croatia, together with the entire delegation from Uganda.

It is good that all the continents are well represented here today. This confirms the attractiveness of Croatia and of the City of Zadar, but also that we are a thriving international organization of parliamentarians and that we can face the challenges of the future together.

Tomorrow the regional presidents will report to us on the activities on their continents.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

From the beginning, the goal of our organization has been to support UN-HABITAT. Direct contact with UN-HABITAT and its partners remains an important concern of the Global Parliamentarians.

Dr. Joan Clos is the new Executive Director of UN-HABITAT since August 2010. I had the opportunity to discuss our future cooperation with him in Nairobi a few weeks ago. I am convinced that the good cooperation with UN-HABITAT will continue under his leadership and that we will develop joint projects together.

Unfortunately, Dr. Clos had to cancel his participation at our forum at short notice. He has requested our friend Dr. Markandey Rai, Chief of Global Parliamentarians and Trade Unions at UN-HABITAT, to represent him.

Through his support, the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat have managed to work together even more closely with UN-HABITAT. Welcome, Dr. Markandey Rai.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The world is rapidly changing. In the middle of the nineteenth Century, three out of ten people lived in urban areas. Today it is more than half. Towards the end of the century, two thirds of the world's population will live in cities or urban centres, of which one point four billion people will live in slums.

Urbanization and the steering of this urbanization into a sustainable direction therefore has to be the theme of the twenty-first Century. For this reason, an international dialogue on this theme of the future is more important than ever.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The next two days we want to ask ourselves the question of how we can effectively make positive changes as legislators. We want to discuss whether and how to protect coastal cities such as those on the Adriatic Coast, and such as those in many other regions of the world, against the impacts of climate change and how the cities themselves can fight climate change.

But we must also deal with the causes.

Urbanization is a global process and it causes huge problems. Many mega-cities have become the nightmare of any housing policy. In these places, we must succeed in breaking the vicious cycle of poverty, hunger, housing shortages, lack of education, lack of work, but also of indifference towards fellow humans, other creatures and the environment.

If we fail to solve the social, environmental and economic problems soon, we must expect to deal with social unrest, crime, abuse of human rights and even revolts and civil wars, as we are unfortunately currently experiencing in many countries.

We know very well how difficult it is to raise the necessary financial and human resources to influence the urbanization process in a positive and, above all, sustainable manner.

We parliamentarians have a special responsibility in addressing these complex challenges. We have received this duty from the voters in our countries.

The major problems of the future lie in our cities, which is why the solution of these problems can only be found together with the cities.

We have to take the people living in cities with us on this difficult path and let them participate in the development.

In the next few days, we want to develop common positions, carry them into our national parliaments and request our governments to act.

I would like to thank all of you for coming to Zadar.

Ladies and Gentlemen,
Dear Colleagues,

I look forward to many good discussions and to our shared desire to initiate positive change.

Mr. President Bebic, thank you once more for your hospitality.

I am strongly convinced that our 7th Global Forum will be a very special highlight in the history of the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat. Working for a better world is worth it!

I wish all of us a successful conference.

Thank you for your attention.