

UBC Task Force on Strategy and General Conference 2017/Mikko Lohikoski

Initial comments on the GC

Place and time: Växjö, Sweden 24–27 October 2017, Concert Hall

Introduction

“The General Conference should be an inspiring event, including interesting and relevant content, for decision makers from the cities and partner organizations. The General Conference should be the highlight of the organization... the agenda should be relevant and focus on cities’ challenges...”

(from the Conclusions and Proposals of the UBC Task Force on development of the Organization, 25.2.2013)

Outline of Växjö GC

The reservation of the Concert Hall has been done and has to be confirmed by mid-December in more detail. Arrival will be on Tuesday 24th, full working days on Wednesday-Thursday 25–26 October and site visits on Friday 27th October.

It is proposed that most part of the GC, except the statutory General Conference on Thursday which is open only to member Cities, will be open and we strive to engage a broad participation.

As one of the first things, the UBC should invite all relevant BSR organizations to Växjö and to propose organizing a coordinating meeting.

As a result of broad discussion, following outline was recommended for the Växjö GC:

Overall topic

LEADERSHIP FOR THE FUTURE

Glocal solutions for sustainable development

Possible sub-themes under the main topic could include such issues as society, quality of life; participation of citizens in shaping their life, balancing safety and surveillance in cities; circular economy and wise use of resources; new solutions for health and social fields etc.

Guidelines for programme preparation

- While most part of GC is open to partners who are also invited to propose their own events, the programme shall reflect UBC strategy priorities

- The GC shall be interactive and interesting in content and working methods – minimum of formal statements, guests invited to have substantial speeches instead of “greetings”; using digital technology and new engaging methods in conducting the meeting and during preparations
- Youth and gender dimension as integrated part of the programme
- Involving member Cities and Commissions in preparing and running of the GC
- Reaching out – UBC must appear as open, dynamic organization which is not conducting its proceedings in closed rooms; this shall be reflected in reaching out to the citizens of Växjö and also more widely. This could reflect Växjö`s role as “the greenest city in Europe” and involve, for example, culinary, artistic etc. dimensions with guests from Member Cities.

It was stated, that a clear division of labour between Växjö, UBC Secretariat and those preparing thematic issues must be established. The same applies to the communication – UBC Communications Manager should establish soonest contact with her counterpart in Växjö.

Three project proposals were presented to the task Force in advance:

- a CECICN proposal concerning a working group
- Resilient UBC Cities – Climate change adaption and mitigation (UBS Sustainable Cities Commission)
- Urbanization, Mobility and Immigration (URMI) project

The two first ones were recommended by the Task Force, provided they are organized in a manner relevant for the UBC Member Cities. More information is requested concerning the third proposal to establish its relevance for the UBC Member Cities and their challenges.

A special session/lunch could be organized for the Mayors/political leaders of the participating cities and organisations with a special theme.

First invitations should be sent out after Stockholm Executive Board as soon as possible with a “save the date” message. More substantial invitations as early in the spring as possible.

Choice of speakers and their topics is of greatest relevance for the success and also for publicity. We must look at least a few highly qualified, internationally known and relevant persons to speak as key note, not only from the public sector but also, for example, leaders from the private sector/business.

To engage the audience, methods such as twitter flow, creative drawing/and or web based question function etc. should be considered. Interactive methods important already during preparatory phase, so participants can send questions to a portal (Facebook?) in advance.

Statutory General Conference

“...elections are very important process for the whole organization...UBC Member Cities must be sure that the elections are transparent, open and that they are invited to put forward candidates. It was noted that for the general good of the organization, it is important that the posts in the UBC organisation attract keen interest and also candidatures”.

(UBC Task Force, 2013)

The overall interest in the statutory part of the General Conference becomes a lively event, including evaluation and discussion about what has been achieved and about our priorities for the coming period. Previous ones have left much to be improved in this respect.

Summary

Preparations and organization of the Växjö General Conference offer great possibility to promote strategic goals of the UBC. It must be done with great devotion, because our future depends to a great extent on how we succeed in this.

UBC has achieved much. But we have potential for much more. It must be mobilized for the benefit of our member Cities and the whole BSR Region.
