

CLOSING SPEECH

Mr Anders Engstrom
UBC President

Dear Friends,

First of all I will turn to the UBC Vice-Presidents Michael Bouteiller and Bartlomiej Sochanski.

Bartlomiej! Politics is politics. Such is life for a politician. We have been working some years together and only to give one example what you have I will mention the UBC Strategy. You have had the principal responsibility for this work. You have been very active and spent a lot of time with the UBC. We have elected you for the Board of Audit, so we will see you also in the future. I think also that you are ready to give your advice and to work together with us in some way. Thank you very, very much.

Michael! We have known each other for a long time. We met during Hanseatic Days before UBC was born, and you have also been a close friend to me. Especially in the very beginning of UBC, during the first Executive Board meetings, you gave me a very, very good support.

You have decided the same as I: Not to candidate as a mayor anymore. After many years of course we will both miss the political life. But life is also other things than politics. I hope that I will have more contacts with you and that we will meet in UBC or in other matters. I have trusted you really during all these years and you have been of a great help for me personally and for the UBC. Thank you for all you have done and we wish you all success.

Dear Friends from Member Cities!

We have now a two years period in front of us. The Executive Board will discuss a plan for these two years in the end of November. Now I have only some reflections about our future work. I will begin with the external work. First of all we must continue the co-operation with other organisations. We can't lobby in Brussels ourselves, that is obvious. During the last two years we have got really good contacts with the governmental level, Council of the Baltic Sea States. They have been present during this conference and it shows the interest from the CBSS and we are really grateful for that. In the last meeting in Palanga they assured that decentralised co-operation is of extremely importance for the Baltic Sea in the future. It is more than conferences and speeches, the most important is implementation. UBC is an excellent organisation for implementation. Agenda 21 is an important task, but we will have much more co-operation specially when we discuss EU enlargement.

We need also to co-operate with BSSSC and CPMR Baltic Sea Commission at the regional level. Cities and regions cooperate, and in reality they do. We also need to cooperate with Baltic Chamber of Commerce, Baltic 21, as we heard earlier today, Baltic Ports, Baltic Tourism, Baltic University only to mention some of the organisations in the Baltic Sea Region.

We must strengthen the contacts with Brussels, sometimes together with others, sometimes ourselves. We need also help from some of the cities which have offices in Brussels. We also need help in to create contacts.

We must really take active part in the Agenda 21 process. The Commission on Environment takes care of these questions in an excellent way. The Presidium and in the Board are not involved very much, because it's a question for the Commission.

We must also take active part in the EU enlargement process. I hope that the Board will also in early spring time have a concrete action plan on what we can do in this matter. We will have a meeting with the Council of the Baltic Sea States already this year and I hope we can have a part of our plan together with the state level after that, but also our own part of this action plan.

UBC has a very good structure in today. We have a very good working Board. We never had any real conflict. All Board member cities try to contribute to the work in a very good way.

I think the Commissions are perhaps the most active part of our Union. They plan their work themselves and it has been functioning very well.

But we must also discuss the other things. How will internal and external information, the web-site and other matter be handled in the efficient way in the future? We are now so many cities, so the internal information is very important.

We have some internal networks, which are very important, for example the UBC Contact Persons. We have started a network for EU Coordinators, which will be extremely important in the enlargement process.

I think also that we must work more together in the Presidium. It has been rather difficult for only us three persons to find days to meet but I hope it will be better. I have promised now that this is my last period so the Vice-presidents or some other persons must be well prepared to take over.

I want to have a meeting with all chairmen of the Commissions during this winter. Not because we are not satisfied with the Commissions, but I think it could be useful for the chairmen to meet and exchange experience how they work in different commissions. I want to discuss with all commissions how to involve Agenda 21, Women and young people in all our commissions. That could be items for a Commissions' Chairmen's meeting next winter.

Finally I will say that my intention during this period is that UBC can build up a network for young people. We have already a first step. Young persons from Sweden, Poland, Kaliningrad and Lithuania took part in the Commission on Environment meeting when the LA21 action plan was discussed. But perhaps we can have a network like women's network with some young people in each city in the future. That will be up to the young people. I shall not decide it, or you shall not decide it. Many of you don't know that here we have two very good representatives from this small network – from Kalmar and from Gdansk. They have taken part in all conference. Thank you for coming. I think if we are ready to support them and if they are ready to accept it, it is very important that they can influence, not only be invited. They must be in the Commissions, because most of the work is done within the Commissions.

Dear friends,

I want to thank first of all the City of Stockholm, for perfect organisation and warm reception during our conference. And all other persons who have contributed so much to the UBC work.

Many thanks to everybody, especially the Commissions, thank you also Pawel Zaboklicki, Anna Sosnicka and Iwona Smigerska Belczak from our Secretariat in Gdansk. You do an excellent work, really. Everything what you do is really perfect and you have a lot to do. Thank you very much.

Juhan Janusson - thank you very much for all your contribution, first of all to myself but also I think most of you have had contacts, not personally, but by e-mail from Juhan.

And finally thank you all enthusiasts. I could mention some persons, but I will not do it, because then it's so easy to forget some other persons. But you are very useful and I hope your cities are ready to allow you to continue to work for the Union, in the networks, in the Bulletin Editorial Board, and so on. Thank you all of you and once again.

With these words, dear Homo Balticus, the V General Conference of the Union of the Baltic Cities is closed.