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*President of UBC*  
*Opening speech*

## **XV UBC General Conference**

### **15-18 October 2019, Kaunas, Lithuania**

Distinguished members of the UBC, distinguished guests,

Welcome at the XV UBC General Conference in Kaunas!

We all want to live in inclusive, safe, well-designed, well-connected cities whose growth is based on participation, dialogue, transparency and knowledge. That is the vision most cities strive for. How far are we on the road to fulfil our dream?

One of the main challenges we face nowadays is the loss of public trust. We must ask the question: Is it the quality of government that has been declining? Or have the citizens started to expect more? Investing in trust should be considered as a central approach to ensure economic growth and to reinforce the social cohesion. All government levels should learn a lesson from the crisis; That the role of the cities in restoring the public confidence in democratic organisations and values is crucial.

At this UBC General Conference in Kaunas we are having an open forum to discuss these challenges. We want to focus on the questions of inclusion. How to empower the citizens' involvement and participation? How to get the youth on board and make them feel responsible for their future?

We shall try to outline the vision of the Inclusive City based on dialogue between inhabitants and decision-makers. We will discuss urbanization, digitalization, regional and European co-operation. One of our sessions will be also devoted to culture as a driving force of the city development.

I truly hope the conference will be an interactive and creative forum where ideas can grow and participants will be involved actively in discussions and exchange. Let's all make this meeting an inspiring space that will give us power to stand up to radicalisation, discrimination and hate.

Thank you Mayor Visvaldas Matijošaitis for hosting us in your beautiful and undiscovered city of Kaunas. And a lot of thanks to your staff for all excellent preparations. Let's have a great conference and an unforgettable time in Kaunas!