

LAUDATION SPEECH IN HONOUR OF PRESIDENT ANDERS ENGSTROM

Mr Michael Bouteiller, Luebeck,
former UBC Vice-President

Dear Anders, dear Dalia, dear Arno, dear friends, dear guests,

I am really glad, to see you again. These are not only polite words. Since the 11 September, this dreadful event which shook the world, we require the proximity of friends. And you all are friends. Only mutual confidence provides real friendship. However, it also provides the democratic virtue to criticise each other. Mutual confidence is a feeling which is at home at the first look in the private family. However at the second look, one recognises fast that friendly ties and a familiar atmosphere developed over the last 10 years, in the UBC too. You became in the last ten years a great family. This inner structure of friendship is the secret of the UBC network. These feelings bear your association. And it is the engine of every new initiative. The mutual confidence is the basis of your common action. In times, when the leading persons from the morning till the evening speak about war, an enormous challenge comes up to us in the cities. We defend the real civil society. Your alliance must therefore still prove. And I am sure it will prove. We all thank Anders Engström. He was responsible for this inner development of the UBC in the last ten years.

What was in the beginning ?

The history of UBC dates back to the first free municipal elections in Poland June 1990. Gdansk had a special historic role as the first steps of the fall of communist rule were taken in Gdansk. The city invited a number of municipal politicians from cities around the Baltic Sea for a seminar to discuss the future. Mr Anders Engström, then mayor of Kalmar, Sweden, and Mr Jacek Starosciak, then Mayor of Gdansk, Poland, were appointed by the seminar to prepare a founding conference for a new organisation for cities around the Baltic Sea. Anders Engström then was 46 years old. He was elected as a mayor of Kalmar a year before.

The foundation of the UBC

The founding conference took place in Gdansk on 19-20 September 1991. Delegates from 32 cities all over the Baltic were present. Dear Anders, you will remember: It was not simple to convince the representatives that they had to put her signature under the foundation document here and now. As in all existential decisions, there was also a strong minority in Gdansk among the delegates, who did not find important questions in the draft of the statutes. Others wanted to postpone the decision because they intended to consult it in their cities. Naturally essential points were not provided in the original draft. For example: the Executive Board was not planned. Only the Presidium and the General Conference were proposed. I had formulated the amendments overnight and had inserted them the next day. We argued for hours above every single word and the notions. For example there was an existential discussion about the significance of the word "state". The Baltic republics in 1991 were they states? From the point of view of some delegates of Russian cities perhaps not. Several times the whole Conference hanged in the balance. It was the special diplomatic skill of Anders and other of the presidium to massage the losing souls in many interruptions of the session. We had success because we wanted success. We will not forget the ceremony of the signature of the foundation document. With great dignity, our friend Christensen from Aarhus improvised this ceremonial.

UBC - a success history

The very personal net

Dear Anders, thanks to your prudence, to your pragmatic style and thanks to your diplomatic and humorous character the UBC became under your presidency a story of success. Today 100 cities are members of UBC. The last ones were Paldiski and Berlin. You managed the six General Conferences and round about 30 meetings of the Executive Board. We all often wondered how you managed that at all. You always were present for us in the UBC. At the same time you had in addition to be at home in Kalmar. Kalmar is a wonderful city, indeed. However, Kalmar had to feel the problems of globalisation as many other cities in the beginning of the 90-ies. For example I remember that your most modern VOLVO factory closed in that time. The mayor was required at home.

Therefore it was a stroke of luck to settle the office of UBC in Gdansk, at first in the Green Gate. Because the support of Gdansk was of vital importance for the UBC. You, Anders, had always a happy hand in the choice of the secretaries-general, first with Piotr Krzyzanowski and later on from 1995 with our beloved Pawel Zaboklicki. You had to rely on each other. Without such mutual confidence it was not possible to manage such a complicated organisation like the UBC.

You were also generously supported by the city of Kalmar. Therefore we all ought to thank deeply our friends in Gdansk and in Kalmar for this generous support of Anders Engström. It was not only a support of a charming personality. It was the support of the whole UBC.

The commissions

It was another far-sighted decision under yours presidency, dear Anders, to connect the main activities of UBC members in the commissions. The first four commissions (Telecommunication, Transportation, Environmental Protection, Social and Cultural Affairs) were formed in the foundation year. We decided already in 1992 to divide Cultural Affairs and Social Affairs. That did not come about because social matters would have nothing to do with cultural matters. We fast saw that the work pending in these fields overtaxed the only one Commission.

Perhaps we all remember the exceptionally great difficulties only to phone each other within the Baltic Sea area in the beginning of our work. Therefore especially the Commission of Telecommunication had to do a lot in the second year. Computers were missing at all corners. That fortunately changed today.

We decided with good reason to speak English. In the beginning it was very hard, especially for elderly people like me. Nowadays our UBC youth naturally is speaking English.

The commissions are the real heart of the UBC network. That is good. The broad diversified collaboration of the cities in the commissions created an indispensable cooperation of the specialists in our cities around the Baltic Sea. The UBC meanwhile has 9 commissions if I counted correctly. One stopped her work 1999: The Commission for Communication. That is perhaps a good sign. It is the sign, that their exist, at the end of your presidency dear Anders, no more communication problems between UBC members.

What were your personal Highlights?

Culture of a democratic city

Your main interest, dear Anders, was to promote the democracy and the evolution of a democratic culture in the cities. This interest comes by heart and your Scandinavian virtue.

- You took care in a special way of the Baltic republics. That you gained a new family in Lithuania, that's hardly surprising. Thank you, Dalia, for the support of Anders and the UBC matters.
- A democratic culture in the cities is not thinkable without gender mainstreaming. You always supported the work of Hjördis Höglund to establish a women's network around the Baltic Sea. It became a success.
- Another main initiative is the support of youth. The executive board decided this June 2001 in Malbork.

- Not at least the best example for democratic culture in the cities will be the adoption of the Social Charter for UBC member cities today at this conference.

International recognition

Another main interest was to bring up the UBC members to the EU and to other international organisations. I'll never forget that they did not know anything about UBC in Brussels at the beginning of the 90-ies. The Baltic Sea was then an unknown field, a tabula rasa. They were dominated by the Mediterranean focus and the yellow Banana.

That changed thanks to your efforts, Anders: We decided in 1993 to deepen contacts with CBSS, co-operated with ICLEI, we received observer status to CLRAE, and requested observer status in HELCOM.

The Commission for Environment formulated the Baltic Sustainable Cities program in 1994 and started then the first UBC project with external funding. In 1995 the project "UBC member Cities and the EU" started. It could be deepened and widened when in 1996 the Swedish State started to finance Juhana Janusson as EU-project manager.

UBC world-wide

In the year 2000 UBC becomes worldwide, not only from east to west, from north to south too. I read in the papers about planned cooperation with a comparable city organisation at the Victoria Lake region in Africa. One discusses upon a cooperation with the Barents-Euro-Arctic Region. At the same time UBC is involved more and more in European Organisations.

UBC shall be a member in the coordinating Committee of the European Sustainable Cities and Towns Campaign.

The Here and Now

Dear Anders, we all could never imagine how it is possible for an only one human being to bring so successfully these diverse activities under one hat. In a certain manner you are a miracle for me and all of us. Because you accomplished what you always reproached us as a destination: The creation of a new human being type, that after your wish in our so loved Baltic Sea area had to increase: the Homo Balticus, the real North-European Personage. We all know: You are the first example of this new type of mankind. I am indeed an opponent of the cloning of people. But faced with success combined with you, I revise this opinion. And by the way we could also solve the problem with the best person to be our president for ever.

Thank you, Anders.

FAREWELL SPEECH

**Mr Anders Engstrom
UBC President 1991-2001**

First of all thank you very, very much, Mr. Michael Bouteiller and Mr. Mikko Jokinen for the very warm words. I am happy that the old veterans, Michael, Mr Piotr Krzyzanowski and Mr. Jacek Starosciak could come. It's not so easy to say some words now and I am happy that I did not prepare any speech, because then I would have probably repeated at least a part of the history of UBC, which Michael just did in a very good way. So instead of that let me only take up some of the few special events from the early days of UBC. As you can understand, especially the first two – three years were

very exciting. Even if it was sometimes rather difficult, we met people from ten countries with different backgrounds and culture.

I said: different culture. I will give you an example: I was a little nervous before the first Board meeting. As usual I discussed with Piotr, our Secretary General at that time, a lot of practical things. Among others I asked: "What kind of suit should I wear? Should it be very dark, or what is the habit in the Baltic States?" Piotr answered: "Come in your green jacket, as you wear just now. On the next Board meeting all of them will come in green jackets." It was like that with almost everything in the beginning. We didn't know very much about our different traditions and way to behave.

One of the first most exciting moments was when Piotr and I went to Kaliningrad. The mayor Mr Shipov invited me rather soon after the 1st General Conference in 1991. Kaliningrad was a very active city in the first years of UBC. I answered: "Yes, I am ready to come, if you are ready to meet your neighbours, the leaders of the city of Klaipeda". We went by car by the old main road from Gdansk to Kaliningrad from World War II. There was no traffic at all during these two hours except some horses and farmers. Piotr had arranged special permissions from Moscow and Warsaw to cross the border at Mamonovo. It was a historic moment, because I was the first Nordic politician to visit Kaliningrad officially since the war. We went together with a delegation in five big Volga cars from Kaliningrad to a neutral place, in Neringa, Nida, on the peninsula between Kaliningrad and Klaipeda. There we met a ten person's delegation from Klaipeda. It was very silent in the very beginning of the meeting, people didn't know what to say. So I started to talk about UBC, but after three, four, or I don't know, six vodkas the discussion started. They realised they hadn't met since the War, but that they had rather similar challenges and rather similar problems to solve.

Another special event was the opening of the first Culture Festival in Kaliningrad. It was marvellous when 500 to 1000 children came into the stadium during the opening ceremony in blue-green clothes, dancing to a special Baltic Sea song written for the UBC. Ms Pahmutova, who wrote a lot of melodies for instance for the Olympic games in Moscow, wrote it. All these young boys and girls waved like waves in the Baltic Sea. Suddenly came 50 or 100 more children with silver clothes, jumping like fishes in the Baltic Sea.

Our first project was aimed to improve communication. When I started the contacts with the Secretariat and also with the city of Gdansk, it was almost impossible to use the telephone. I had to go to the office at midnight to be able to find some free line. To send documents was also very difficult. There was no fax machine even in Gdansk, only telex. In Kalmar municipality we had no telex since 20 years. So they sent a telex to a small company in the Port of Kalmar. They came running to me in the City Hall, because they always wrote: URGENT at the top of the message.

It was so difficult with communication, so when Kaliningrad signed a very important document, they didn't even dare to send it by post. Piotr had to go to the boarder by car in order to receive the envelope. So we started the first project. A consultation company in Kalmar promised to investigate for free, obviously because they saw a new market. After half a year they proposed a rather expensive satellite based solution. Just after, something called Internet appeared. It was a revolution for our cities. Today we are sending messages from our Secretariat everyday to all member cities.

I will only mention one more memory from the very first years. I tried to travel rather much at the beginning. It was necessary at that time in order to learn to know each other. I have had the opportunity to visit the Baltic States, Poland and Russia 170 times during these bygone 10 years. In 1993 I decided to see a little bit more than conference halls and airports. So I spent 3 weeks of holidays travelling by my car along the coast from Tallinn via Parnu, Riga, Liepaja, Klaipeda, to Kaliningrad, and inland up to Tartu, Narva, and back to Sweden. I learned a lot, and I met many people who had never seen a Swede. I was sitting until 4 or 5 o'clock in the morning together with fishermen in a small cottage outside Tallinn, eating fresh fish. I met farmers – we couldn't speak at all, I couldn't speak their language, they couldn't speak English or German, and of course not Swedish.

All these 10 years have really been fantastic. I have learned so very much, especially about humans. And of course I have got many, many good friends. Now I will ask Jacek Starosciak to come up. Also Michael Bouteiller and Piotr Krzyzanowski once again.

Jacek Starosciak was the man who started UBC and arranged the first conference, which Michael just told you about. It was in June 1990, after the first free elections in Poland. After this Conference we took contacts around the Baltic to see if it was an interest to create UBC. One day in my room in the City Hall of Kalmar, we sat together with a lawyer to discuss the first draft of the UBC statutes. Suddenly Jacek said: "I want to speak with Mr Engstrom myself". After the lawyer left the room, he said: "I want you to be the first President of UBC." I replied: "No, no, no, really not, you must be the first President. I have no experience. I have been a little in Poland during „Solidarity” movement time, but not very much. My English is terrible, I never liked languages at school". But Jacek said: "Think about it until we meet in Rovaniemi, at a conference arranged by the Council of Europe. There we will inform about our idea to create a network around the Baltic Sea". When we met, I thought that he had forgotten about Presidency, but he came back and said: „We want you to be the President.” „No, no, it’s impossible, completely.” Then you told me “It is really not possible for me, because I will very soon leave the City of Gdansk”. I didn’t know at that time, but later you were appointed as the advisor to the new President of Poland. But you told me: „You said you couldn’t speak good English. That is no excuse. Lech Walesa has recently been elected as the President of Poland and he can not speak a word in English.” So I said: „OK, OK, I will try, at least a period”.

I must thank you, Michael, a great politician in Germany, in Lubeck and also here in UBC, for all your support. With it, I managed to solve many problems during the first years. You could inspire and support me, but you could also sometimes be frank and criticise me, but you did it in a very constructive way. I realised that it was only a real close friend, who could do that. This was so important for me. I had not managed without your friendship, Michael.

I had also Piotr as a support. It was necessary to have a Secretary you could trust and who could be of help in all situations. We could also be more personal friends when we met in the office, or when we had a walk outside Gdansk and Gdynia along the coast, to have a meal together and discuss about the future. It was very important.

Thank you, all three of you, for what you have done for me and for UBC. UBC had a drawing competition, and it is decided by the UBC Board that the drawings shall be used as gifts. Now I have no power, but in spite of this I decide to give three of these drawings of your own choice. It can be a memory from UBC.

There have been many persons contributing in a very special way for UBC, first of course my colleagues in the Presidency. Mr. Michael Bouteiller was Vice-President from the very beginning, 1991-1999. Mr Cherbakov, from St.Petersburg, was vice-president 1991-1993. I am sorry Mr. Andris Teikmanis, from Riga and vice President 1993-1995, could not be here with us now. I think many in the Board expected that he should take over after me in 1995. But suddenly he disappeared as ambassador to Strasbourg. We also planned that Mr. Jaak Tamm, our Vice-President 1995-1997, should take over after me. But unfortunately he passed away some years ago Mr. Bartlomiej Sochanski, whom you have met today, was Vice-President 1997 – 1999. He was very active and it was planned that he should take over. But the elections in Poland changed the situation. The Board agreed that Mr. Eugenijus Gentvilas should be the next President. Instead he became a minister in Lithuania and was not a candidate any more. And of course Armas Lahoniitty, who has been Vice-President between 1999 – 2001. So you can understand it’s not only because of something special with me that has caused me to be UBC President during all these 10 years. There were other circumstances that made my stay so long for me in UBC.

I specially want to thank our Secretariat. If you are the head of an organisation, very often you want to have people close to you. I had the Secretariat rather far from Kalmar. All the time I have felt that I could trust you, Pawel, Iwona and Anna. For a President it is necessary to have this good Secretariat.

Sometimes when our economy was meagre and when cities requested financial contribution, Pawel had to go in front of me to reject. And it was up to me to say yes. This was a hard work, but Pawel had done it in a loyal way.

Mr. Juhan Janusson, our EU Coordinator, but in a way my political secretary, has been a fantastic help for me. Juhan and I met when I planned for a project in Lithuania about public transport, which needed a project leader. I turned to the Association of Swedish Public Traffic. They said: "We know about a consultant with some experience from cooperation in the Baltic Sea". After engaging him I noticed how many different skills he had. So I decided to employ him within UBC. Soon we noticed that Juhan was useful for almost everything in UBC. Thank you very much, Juhan, hope to see you in Kalmar.

Finally I will mention some veterans. Today there are only three active persons in UBC, who have been involved from the very beginning: Hjordis Høglund from Sundsvall, Mikko Jokinen from Turku, and Carl Nielsen from Aarhus. I would like to give you, Hjordis and Carl, one of the paintings from the children's drawing competition. Mikko, you will not have your painting yet since you will continue as active. Now you will be the only one who has been working from the very beginning. Hjordis, Mikko and Carl have been extremely useful for UBC and you have had so many years of experience to contribute.

There are also other veterans. It's very difficult for me to mention them. But I will at least try. Some have been active in UBC for many years, others came later.

I would like to mention Lillian Westerberg from Stockholm, Olaf P. Christiansen from Aarhus, Slawomir Szafranski from Szczecin, Ina Sidlauskienė from Klaipėda, Toivo Riimaa from Pärnu, Tonu Karu from Tallinn, and Lars Malmberg from Kalmar.

Of course I must mention the busy bees in UBC, who perhaps were the most useful persons. They are not chairmen or presidents, but they are working in different working groups or with different projects. First people from our secretariat, but also Risto Veivo, Ewa Kurjata, Ewa Depka, Petra Hamann, Karin Wohlgemuth, Sonja Hilavuo, Viktors Buls. And of course there are more persons, but these persons were extremely useful in different ways.

And finally I want to thank one person who was active in the beginning of UBC in the city of Klaipėda. Of some reason she is not active in UBC today, because she moved to Sweden, to me, it is my wife Dalia, who has stood all my documents on the tables, all my phone calls, and all my travelling. Thank you Dalia.

I want to thank all other persons I have met. You have supported me and many of you are now my close friends, I can't mention all of you.

Thanks also to our sister organisations, Council of the Baltic Sea States, BSSSC, CPMR, and Baltic Chamber of Commerce Association.

To all of you, Herzlichen Dank, Auf Wiedersehen! Dziękuję bardzo, do widzenia! Spasiba bolszoje, do svidania! Nuoshirdus achiu, sudie! Liels paldies, Uz redzesanos! Suur tänu, head aega! Hjärtligt tack - på återseende!