

Expos for the Sustainable City of the XXI Century

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Session 1: Expos and Environmental Challenge for Cities
Statement by Panellist Mr. Stephan Weil, Lord Mayor of Hannover,
Germany

Ladies and Gentlemen,

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Today, environmental issues play a central role in the government of any metropolis, especially with regard to the global climate debate.

A large part of the greenhouse effect and resultant climate change is caused by urban agglomerations. So it is reasonable to expect cities to devise sustainable models for the future of urban life – models that will reduce emissions of climate-altering gases such as carbon dioxide, methane and nitrogen oxide.

The City of Hannover shoulders this responsibility. Our first climate protection programme began as early as 1990. Between 1990 and 2005 greenhouse gas emissions from energy generation and transport decreased by 7.5 percent – and this was achieved despite economic growth, increasing personal mobility and more living space per head of the population.

Hannover will, however, redouble its efforts to make greater reductions in CO2 emissions.

This year we have taken a significant step in this direction. Led by the City administration and the city's energy utility, Stadtwerke Hannover AG, we have founded the 'Climate Alliance 2020'. This is a very ambitious action programme, and one that sets an example for the whole of Germany. Our aim is – by the way, without electricity from nuclear power – to cut local CO2 emissions by 40%.

To achieve this we will need broad-based support for our activities right across the urban community. Therefore we have formed binding partnerships with all the relevant social groupings, from political parties through environmental groups to city sporting associations, housing companies and manufacturing enterprises. All partners have accepted the sectoral targets we devised in a consultative process. Together, we will work to reduce energy demand on the consumer side – in industry, offices, residential buildings and private households – by at least 25 percent.

The City administration alone will introduce around 30 separate measures. These range from energy-efficient modernisation of all municipal buildings to prioritising climate protection aspects in sales of municipally owned building land to making energy efficiency an important procurement criterion, and, finally, energy saving training in kindergartens and schools.

I am convinced that, with this powerful alliance, and the specific milestones that we have agreed, Hannover will meet the targets we have

set. That this remarkable alliance could agree on such ambitious objectives is due, I feel, in no small part to the fact that Hannover was the host city of the Expo 2000 World Exposition.

Expo 2000 was, and still is, a very significant milestone on Hannover's development into an exemplary future-oriented and climate-friendly city. The World Exposition gave this process a phenomenal impulse – above all during the years of preparation for this enormous event. If it hadn't been for Expo 2000, many of the developments and changes – especially a shift in awareness among the citizens – would not have been possible or, at least, not in such a short period.

I'd like to illustrate this with a project from those days that is still a shining example today:

Expo 2000 was the first world exposition that allowed exemplary contributions outside the actual exposition grounds. Its motto, 'Humankind – Nature – Technology', was a clear call to create an 'exhibit' that brought this motto to life through a model residential development.

Hannover seized this once-in-a-lifetime chance with its 'Ecological Optimisation on Kronsberg' project, an exemplary development of 6,000 new homes on a 140-hectare site. The aim was to reduce CO2 emissions from the new settlement by at least 60 percent – 80 percent with wind power plants – compared to conventional housing. Subsequent studies prove that the targets have been met.

This is not the whole story, however: in realising the Kronsberg project, the City of Hannover was striving for environmentally responsible long-term development at several different levels, with environmental quality and environmental awareness as our primary concerns.

We took an integrative approach that included many stakeholders at all levels of society and every conceivable public administrative body and administrative level. An environmental liaison agency was specially established to coordinate this process.

The main focus of technical planning and construction was on very efficient energy provision systems, combined with environmentally sound construction methods and the sparing use of natural resources.

For the realisation of this residential area, all the available know-how on ecological optimisation of construction and housing, including social aspects, was consistently, holistically applied across the entire settlement.

Today one could say: the World Exposition achieved by practical demonstration of this exhibit to create the vision of an innovative and future-orientated urban development, based on the concept of a sustainable, compact settlement structure.

Compact urban structures, short distances between home, work and amenities, mixed use, traffic and mobility management, more efficient, energy-saving public transport, generous open space and, especially,

greenspace close to home are important preconditions for combating the effects of climate change.

Hannover has adopted all these as the guiding principles of its urban planning; experience from this Expo project is put to good use in our day-to-day work. New housing areas in the city continue to apply these principles and incorporate the latest innovations. The City Council and people of Hannover place great importance on this.

Hannover's citizens and its politicians, have realised that the use of climate-friendly technologies is crucially important, and that effective climate protection and one's own quality of life are not mutually exclusive, but mutually dependent.

Otherwise, if this Expo project had been just a local success it would never have been the right to be labeled as 'World Exposition Exhibit'.

Indeed we're proud to see how our efforts have born fruit far beyond the Hannover city limits. Since the year 2000, representatives from many communities around the world have visited the Expo project to gather information about our management and planning processes, the technology we applied, and the integrative approach we took to its development.

Above and beyond this, the City of Hannover is much in demand for practical advice on sustainable urban construction. Thanks to financial

support from the European Union, we have been involved in project-related advice to local government as far away as China and Vietnam.

Initiated by a provincial government and a city in central China, the City of Hannover and its local water management enterprises were most recently involved in negotiations with regard to construct new settlements in China in further developed 'Kronsberg Standard'.

In my view, world expositions offer a unique chance to reach as many cities and countries as possible. I would emphatically support using the Expo as a platform to show how one can rise to the challenges of our times – especially on the issue of the sparing use of resources, and thus the sustainable shaping of the realities of everyday life and the environment of our cities.

The Expo in Zaragoza has continued this tradition in admirable fashion, by adopting the absolutely crucial issue of water and sustainable development as its central theme.

I hope that the visitors in Zaragoza will take home many strong impressions and inspiring ideas, and that in this way the World Exposition once again contributes to sustainably secure and improve living conditions around the world.

Thank you!