

FRIDAY 12 MAY 2006 AT 13.30 PM

OPENING OF THE HABITAT-CONFERENCE

Ten Hoopen:

Dear colleagues and other guests,

On behalf of the House of Representatives of the States General, I'd like to welcome you to The Hague. It is a great pleasure to see you here today, so various in background and from so many countries.

I would like to extend a particularly warm welcome to the members of the parliaments of Belgium, Czech Republic, Finland, Germany, Italy, Mexico, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Turkey!

I also extend a warm welcome to the organisations that are active in the field of sustainable urban development, diminishing urban poverty and international development cooperation in the context of UN-Habitat.

I am very grateful that both parliamentarians and fieldworkers

are willing to exchange their experiences and discuss about their role regarding the subject of this working conference: The UN Habitat Agenda and the challenges for sustainable urbanisation achievements after 10 years of fighting urban poverty!

I also extend a warm welcome to *Mr. Peter Götz*, president of the European Group of the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat on the activities within the European Group.

I am very honoured to announce the speakers to the conference and a warm welcome to them as well:

- *Mr. Paul Taylor*, Director UN-HABITAT Liaison Office to the European Union and Belgium
- *Mr. Ernesto Gil Elorduy*, president of the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat on the activities within the Global Group,
- *Mr. Schmidt-Eichstädt*, Prof. at the Technical University of Berlin and director of 'Baurecht und Planung' on the international comparison of the legislation within the framework Agenda in Europe,

- *Mrs. Sybille Dekker*, Dutch Minister of Social Housing, Spatial Planning and Environment on the Dutch activities both at the European as well as the global level
- *Mr. Hans van der Sluijs*, Chairman of the Dutch Habitat Platform and mayor of the municipality of Maarsse, who will present the keynote address.

After Bonn/Germany in 1997,

Zagreb/Croatia in 1999,

Helsinki/Finland 2000

and Berlin/Germany in 2003,

this is already our fifth regional forum of the global parliamentarians on Habitat Europe. I like to thank the Presidium of the European Group of the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat for taking the initiative to organise this conference.

The main purpose of the conference is to form answers to the question what progress will be like in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda in the European countries. What is the role of the parliamentarians and other organisations with respect to this goal?

The conference will conclude with the adoption of “The declaration of The Hague 2006”, in which we will set down the main conclusions of the debate. The declaration will serve as input to the Third United Nations World Urban Forum, which will take place in Vancouver from the nineteenth to the twenty-third of June 2006.

Finally, let me say that I hope very much that you will have a fruitful exchange of views today and tomorrow. I hope you will manage to raise the role of the parliamentarians and other organisations in the implementation of the Habitat Agenda in the European countries to a higher level.

Dear colleagues and other guests, I hope that this Conference will pass off, as usual, in an atmosphere of good fellowship, openness and positive minds. I wish you a good conference, in every respect!

You will now have to excuse me as I have to leave earlier for other obligations.

My colleague, member of the House of Representatives and Member of the Presidium of the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat - Europe, Mrs. Joanneke Kruijsen, will be chairing the conference this afternoon and tomorrow and I leave you in her good care.

So now, let us begin our conference.