



Global Parliamentarians on **HABITAT**

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Welcome

Board Meeting, 4 October 2011
Quinta Real Hotel, Aguascalientes, Mexico

The spoken word prevails!

GOOD LAWS FOR A BETTER HABITAT

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- Mr. Carlos Lozano de la Torre
- Dr. Joan Clos
- Mr. Heriberto Félix Guerra
- Mr. Oscar Lopez Velarde Vega

Estimados señoras y señores,

Dear Colleagues,

Dear Friends,

I would like to wish all of you a very warm welcome to our board meeting.

First of all, I would like to cordially thank the Government of Aguascalientes, which is represented here today at the highest level in the person of Mr. Carlos Lozano de la Torre. Thank you, Mr. Lozano de la Torre, for your great hospitality.

My special thanks also go to my predecessor, Oscar Lopez Velarde Vega, who is Secretary of Urban Management and Land Development of the government of Aguascalientes and is currently representing the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat as Alternate President of the Advisory Board.

Yesterday, the Scroll of Honour Award was awarded by UN-HABITAT. We recall that Oscar was a winner of the Scroll of Honour Award already in 1997. This award is given for outstanding contributions to the improvement of human settlements. Oscar was for many years the major engine of the Global Parliamentarians on Habitat. For that I am personally very grateful. And I know that he has done a lot for the people of his city and his country, where he has established important legal and regulatory reforms. We are looking forward to finally get a personal impression of his city and the positive changes he has brought about. Thank you, dear Oscar, for having made our board meeting possible in your city.

I am particularly pleased to welcome Executive Director Joan Clos here today. We are greatly honoured by your participation in our rather small and modest board meeting. Thank you, Executive Director, for coming. We look forward to your message.

Yesterday we celebrated World Habitat Day under the theme "Cities and Climate Change" together with UN-Habitat and the Government of Aguascalientes. We parliamentarians already acknowledged this important theme in 2008 in our Parliamentarians Roundtable within the framework of the World Urban Forum 4 in Nanjing, China.

More recently, this theme was a major focus of our 7th Global Forum in May 2011 in Zadar, Croatia. It is also the subject of the Declaration adopted in Zadar.

We are grateful to observe that our political goals and those of UN-Habitat are in agreement.

More than half of the world population, which has since grown to seven billion, lives in cities. 70 percent of global carbon dioxide emissions are produced by cities.

Metropolitan areas are without a doubt the biggest cause of climate change.

Cities are also most the affected by climate disasters, as they are often located near coasts and rivers.

Cities can and therefore must make important contributions to climate protection; through urban planning, the production and use of renewable energies or by improving the energy efficiency of city buildings. The prominent role of cities will increase even more due to rapid urbanization. The solution of our problems can therefore only take place together with the cities.

I believe that it is very important that we parliamentarians honour our responsibility and that we walk this difficult path together with our urban residents and let them participate in the development.

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you very much for coming to Mexico to participate in our discussions today. But first I am looking forward to the words of our host, the governor of Aguascalientes, Carlos Lozano de la Torre. Thank you once more for your hospitality.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

At our last board meeting in Zadar, Croatia, on 18 May 2011, the decision was taken to invite all members of the regional Councils to our next meeting. We have important issues to discuss and we welcome suggestions from all over the world.

This year has been a good year and an important year for the GPH.

In 2011, important events were carried out to which the GPH made valuable contributions. In April 2011, I represented our organization in a high-level panel on housing during the 23rd Governing Council of UN-HABITAT in Nairobi, Kenya.

In May 2011 we held our 7th World Forum under the motto of the GPH "Good Laws for a Better Habitat". In addition, regional Forums were held.

There have been many changes this year. Our regional Councils regrouped. In April 2011, Africa elected its new Board of Directors. In May 2011 Asia and Europe elected new leaders. In America too, a change at the top took place and a new president was elected. It is important that we make use of our coming together today to develop common goals and activities and to get to know each other personally.

Our Vice Presidents or their representatives will report on past and future activities in their regions.

After that, I would like to discuss with you the future international activities of the GPH.

We should begin to look for a host for the 8th Global Forum of the GPH as soon as possible. Our next Global Forum should be held in 2013.

We also need to consider how we can make an active contribution to Rio +20 in June 2012.

Today we should also try to find a theme for our round table at the World Urban Forum VI in Naples, Italy, in September 2012.

The Global Parliamentarians on Habitat will have been founded 25 years ago in 2012. We should also celebrate this special occasion in a special way.

In addition, it has been suggested that we should consider the structure of our organization.

Following the suggestion of Dr. Markandey Rai from UN-Habitat, our African colleagues have recommended revising our By-Laws and to use them as a basis for a "Charter for Parliamentarians". I am grateful for the great commitment of our colleagues. Our By-Laws are the main foundation for our work. We should handle them with great care and talk about this today.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you can see we have a full agenda. Thank you for coming to Aguascalientes to discuss these important issues. I am looking forward to fruitful discussions.

Once again, welcome!

Proposal / issue for WUF6:

Cities as engines for sustainable growth