

Local endogenous development and
urban regeneration of small alpine towns

Morning Plenary Session

UN HABITAT OFFICIAL ADDRESS

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A collage of images related to ALP City and urban development. It includes a map of the Alps, a red banner with the ALP City logo and the text "We are part of it!", and various photos of people and urban environments. Text labels include "economic development", "service and quality of life", "urban environment", and "cooperation among cities".

towards innovation
ALP City
through strategic transfer and networks

A kick-off event

April 3rd, 2007
Piedmont Region Congress Hall
corso Stati Uniti 23 • Turin

REGIONE PIEMONTE

UN HABITAT



Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great pleasure for me to address this International Seminar on innovation transfer held in this beautiful city of Turin.

Allow me first to say how much I would have liked to be here today. Unfortunately, we are in the midst of preparing for our Governing Council to be held in less than two weeks and my presence is therefore required in Nairobi.

This is the first major event, organized within the AlpCity Project by Piedmont Region and the European Union, with the support of UN-Habitat. I take this opportunity to welcome the representatives from both these institutions.

Allow me, before telling you more of our objectives here, to thank our host, Mme. Mercedes Bresso, President of Piedmont Region for her hospitality; to extend my appreciation to all those involved in organising this Seminar; and to thank all of you for participating in this event.

Now let us focus on the reasons for our gathering here.

The European Commission recently proposed a set of priorities for its new programming period (2007-2013). I am pleased to learn that supporting sustainable development in disadvantaged areas appears as part of these priorities.

The AlpCity Project has organised this Seminar to make sure that the Commission's proposal takes full account of the input and experience of all key stakeholders with an active interest in ensuring that the sustainable social, economic and environmental development of the Alpine Space.



This seminar provides us the opportunity to assess the implementation of previous support to the Alps, to look ahead to future needs and, more importantly, to put forward proposals to address them.

It could seem almost bizarre that the opening statement of a Seminar organised within the framework of the European Alpine Space Programme is assigned to the Executive Director of UN-Habitat, the lead UN agency for housing and urban development.

My role here is due to the open-minded vision of the Piedmont Region's leadership as regards the challenges posed by sustainable development at the international level.

Indeed, the concept of sustainable development cannot be restricted to regional or national borders. For this reason I commend the initiative of the AlpCity Project to build a bridge with UN-Habitat "Best Practices and Local Leadership" Programme and to focus part of its work on creating a Best Practices Database and Best Practices Guidelines, managed by the AlpCity Regional Urban Observatory, in line with UN-Habitat's work at the global level.

I also wish to commend the work of AlpCity in participating actively in the '2006 Dubai International Award for Best Practices to improve the Living Environment'. This global award system feeds UN-HABITAT's on-line Best Practices Database which has become the most important depository of knowledge, expertise and experience on sustainable development initiatives at the local level worldwide.

Today, this database contains over 2,000 initiatives from more than 160 countries. It allows all those interested in sustainable development to access information on what works. It has enabled UN-Habitat and its partners to identify some of the key contributing factors to overcoming the social, economic and environmental challenges facing a rapidly urbanising and globalising world, and to integrate lessons learned in our policy recommendations and our operational projects.

Finally, I am pleased to announce that this close collaboration between UN-Habitat and Piedmont Region, acting as AlpCity Project Lead Partner, will be officially ratified through the signature of an Agreement of Cooperation to pursue the vision: "to contribute to



healthier, safer, more equitable and sustainable cities and communities through more effective partnerships between and the implementation of practical solutions by key stakeholders in the human settlement and development process”.

It is also clear that sustainable development cannot be conceived as a zero-sum game. While we battle on the European front for effective action against climate change and the loss of bio-diversity, we must not forget that sustainable development in much of the world today also has other meanings. I refer here to the fact that one billion people are currently living in life-threatening slums. And if current trends continue, this number could increase by another 400 million by 2020. The majority of these one billion people have no decent shelter, no access to water and sanitation, have no garbage collection. They live under the constant threat of evictions and are the most vulnerable to natural disasters and the consequences of climate change.

It is therefore necessary for all of us to target a positive-sum game, where the more advanced regions and countries are seriously engaged in filling the gap with less advanced regions. In this sense the transfer of knowledge, expertise and experience through effective networks plays a pivotal role as strategically promoted by the AlpCity Project.

I look forward with great anticipation to the European initiatives aimed at identifying and transferring innovative solutions for growth and development, namely:

- “Regions for Economic Change”, dedicated to discovering best practices and spreading them to all regions in order to foster their regional growth and reducing economic disparities, and
- Infosusta.net, which implies the establishment of a common database of research results and best practices between European Union and UN-Habitat.

With these brief remarks, I wish you a very fruitful outcome.

Thank you for your kind attention.