

Remarks by ambassador Ole Egberg Mikkelsen, at the opening of a conference on Sustainable Development Goals in Architecture and Urban Planning.

Let me extend a warm welcome to all of you to this conference on “Sustainable development goals in architecture and urban Planning”.

The embassy happy to co-host the conference with the City of Warsaw, the Warsaw Branch of the Association of Polish architects, SARP, and the Masovian District Chamber of Polish Architects. We are proud to be your partners and we look forward to work with you.

I also wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Zodiac Pavilion of Architecture for hosting us today in this wonderful facility. You are already hosting the exhibition on Danish cities of the Future. It opened just a couple of weeks ago and it also has a focus on climate adaptation.

Let me thank the management of the Zodiac Pavilion of Architecture for your engagement in strengthening Danish-Polish cooperation and contacts in the field of architecture and urban planning.

I also wish to greet the participants from Denmark in today’s conference: Sofie Stilling, Arne Cermak and Natalia Budnik. You have come to a very dynamic country with a booming economy, a construction sector in overdrive and probably the highest concentration of building-cranes anywhere in Europe: It must be the dream for any architect and city planner.

You have also come to a city that is strongly committed to sustainability. The new mayor, Mr. Rafał Trzaskowski, won a landslide victory on a political platform with a strong commitment to openness, tolerance and sustainability. So you have come to a place with a keen interest in the perspectives on sustainability that you can bring to the table and a strong commitment to translate them into realities.

The conference is about integrating the sustainable development goals in architecture and urban planning. Why is that so important that we should spend a full day discussing it?

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted by the heads of state and governments of all United Nations Member States in 2015.

The SDG’s provide a shared blueprint for peace, prosperity and sustainability for all nations and the entire planet, now and into the future. This might sound very high-flying and very far from construction, building and city planning, but it is not.

First of all: The SDG’s are binding and nations have to report on their implementation and how they translate the goals into action on the ground.

Secondly: The Global Goals result from a process that has been more inclusive than ever, with Governments involving business, civil society and citizens from the outset and they all agreed on where the world needs to go. Fulfilling these ambitions will take an unprecedented effort by all sectors in society — and private business and local governments will play an indispensable role in the process. Because they are the ones that will translate the high flying goals into realities

This is exactly where today’s conference gathering architects, urban planners, municipalities and investors, comes into the picture.

Buildings and human settlements are a major consumer of energy and resources. They are also an important source of CO2 emissions and they produce enormous amounts of waste. Thus, it plays a major role, how you – architects, investors and city-planners - design our buildings and our cities. It has a crucial impact on whether we will achieve the SDGs or not.

What is it then that Denmark can bring to the table in this process? Four things:

First of all: Danish architects and city planners have been very good at creating cities, where pedestrians and people on bikes – not cars - are in the focus.

Secondly: We have started early on climate adaptation. That is very simple: We have to, because many of our cities are right by the water with low laying areas so something needs to be done to adapt to climate change.

Thirdly: We have been good at making cities energy efficient and sustainable, though an ambitious national policy on energy efficiency and green technologies. But the local communities are also ambitious. The city of Sønderborg for instance has decided that the city's CO2 footprint shall be zero ten years from now.

Fourthly: Our private sector has adopted the SDG's as their compass that helps them navigate in a world of uncertainty. Many of our major companies have integrated the SDG's in their own strategies and they have also played a major role in making Denmark a leader in energy efficiency and green technologies. Many of them are present in Poland. VELUX has made Poland a European superpower in energy efficient windows, Rockwool has made Poland the biggest European manufacturer of thermal insulation and Danfoss, a global leader in energy efficient heating and cooling, has a major manufacturing hub here.

So it makes a lot of sense for Denmark and Poland to work together and exchange experience in the field of urban planning and architecture in order to live up to the SDG's. It is a win-win: It is good for Poland, for Denmark and for the entire planet. It is however also good for business. Because commercial activities, including building and construction, need to be sustainable in the future.

I hope that today's conference will be a step in that direction.

Thank you for your attention.