

Ecocities conference
Tartu 15.8.2011

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Daamid ja härrad

Minul on suur au osaleda Rohevik-keskkonnafestivali avamisel Tartus. Tänavu on Soome Põhjamaade Ministrite Nõukogu eesistujamaa, ja meie programmis on kesteva arengu soodustamisel oluline roll. Ma tahan tänada Põhjamaade Ministrite Nõukogu esindust Eestis ning teisi partnereid suurepärase koostöö eest.

Ladies and Gentlemen

Estonians have recently celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the country's regained independence. Freedom gave Estonians the possibility to develop their society on the basis of democratic values.

During the past twenty years Estonia has achieved many important goals. It has joined the efforts of European and transatlantic organizations to develop cooperation strengthening the security of the country and the economic well-being of its inhabitants

The Nordic countries welcomed Estonia as well as Latvia and Lithuania as close partners twenty years ago. This cooperation has broadened considerably in the course of the past two decades. Environmental issues have become part and parcel of Nordic-Baltic cooperation.

Concern for the environment has, of course, not been imported. One of the early signs already in the 1980's of the will of the Estonians to manage their own affairs was actually the concern they felt for the degradation of the environment. The message was clear: they wanted to take care of the land for which they saw a better future in general.

This could be the motto for all countries: we should take good care of our lands, because it is the only way to achieve and maintain human and social development. Sustainable development should be made the basis for all planning. Climate change is a case in point: we should concentrate our efforts to slow it down and to cope with its adverse effects.

Environmentally sound development must cover all sectors of society. Parliaments and governments are needed to provide the necessary impulses in legislation allocation of resources. Local governments, cities and townships are needed because they know best how to fulfill the needs of the inhabitants while safeguarding the environment.

Business enterprises are essential partners in developing a low-carbon future. Patterns of production and consumption will change probably more quickly than we realize. Ecologically sound technology will be in great demand.

Public-private partnerships are needed to create competitive innovations. Universities are perhaps the best forums for such partnerships.

Hybrid cars are here already. Electric cars will be enter mass production in a few years time. Carbon neutral buildings are already on the drawing board in many of our countries.

One word about the Baltic Sea. It deserves to be rescued. The Baltic Sea is surrounded by some of the wealthiest countries on earth, and we have the technology to save our sea. The largest metropolis, St. Petersburg, now has up-to-date sewage treatment plants, and the positive results are already showing in the Eastern part of the Gulf of Finland.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The Rohevik/green growth theme will continue tomorrow and Saturday in Tallinn, where also the Finnish minister of the environment Ville Niinistö will participate.

I wish to thank our partners in Tartu and elsewhere in Estonia for making it possible to organize all these events under the Rohevik/green growth theme.