



Speech from Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation

Speech by Mehmet Kaplan at COP21

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Ladies and gentlemen, dear participants!

I am very happy to be invited here today. The issues we are going to discuss today are questions close to my heart – and responsibilities as a minister for housing and urban development.

Cities and urban areas are becoming increasingly important for our environment, for economic development and for the security, welfare and quality of life for a growing share of the world's population. Holistic and sustainable urban planning is needed to meet both present and future challenges.

The challenge is twofold. We must continue to improve the sustainability of existing cities. And we must also do our best to make sure that new cities and neighbourhoods are sustainably built from the very outset. However, the Swedish experience is that cities, if planned and managed correctly, also hold possible solutions to many of these problems, for example through efficient infrastructure, energy and transport solutions.

Sustainable urban development can not only help boost local economies and quality of life, but also be an important part of the transformation into a global, competitive and welfare-producing zero-carbon economy. Striving towards sustainable urban development thus makes sense, not only from an environmental perspective but also for economic reasons. Knowledge and environmental technology can play important roles in shaping sustainable urbanisation. In fact, sustainable urban development can be an important part of achieving competitive and thriving societies.

Sweden has a long history of focusing on the environment. The Swedish municipalities have played an important part in this development.

Sustainable development is nowadays mainstreamed into a normal part of their ordinary activities. Swedish industry has also been at the forefront in developing energy-efficient technology solutions. Important applications have, for example, included urban infrastructure solutions for water, energy and waste. Close and long-term co-operation between different municipal departments, housing organisations, planning and engineering consultancies and the manufacturing industry has been a key factor in delivering many of the solutions that are established today.

However, cities and municipalities shall not be given the whole responsibility for development. Collaboration is needed between major actors like local, regional and national authorities, energy suppliers, building industry and – last but not at least – the local community. A good example of a project where smart solutions are supported is the "Stockholm Royal Seaport" area in Stockholm, covering a wide area of former harbour and industrial district. For this area, the local planning administration has set up a certain environmental program that sets up the means of collaboration for every part of the process.

As sustainable urban development must tackle various different problems simultaneously, an integrated approach is needed. Therefore, the Swedish Government has involved several governmental agencies in a commission aiming to strengthen collaboration, coordination, knowledge development, dissemination and exchange of experience in issues related to urban development. We call it the "Platform for Sustainable Urban Development" .

Public transport has a key role to play in any successful city development, both relating to reduced carbon footprint and the possibilities for new housing and construction. With good access to public transport, new locations become more attractive to live in, which in turn attracts new investments in housing construction. In order to promote sustainable urban environments the government offers co-financing of local and regional investment in urban public transport.

Many Swedish companies are world leaders within the field of Sustainable Urban Development. I believe that there could be potential interest for other countries as well.

Sweden will become one of the world's first fossil-free welfare countries. Leading the way in this transition is not only morally right, it is economically smart as well. Together with companies, municipalities and organisations, we challenge other countries and actors to become fossil-free and to raise the

bar in the near future, for example by taking steps towards a circular and bio-based economy.

For the first time, we can have a climate change agreement to which all the countries of the world contribute. However, it will not reduce emission levels sufficiently. For this reason, the pace of transition must increase. Paris marks the start, not the finish line.

Thank you.