

UNECE Forum of Mayors (6 October)

Peter Danielsson, Mayor of Helsingborg, Sweden

Ms. Executive Secretary, Mayor Kanaan, distinguished delegates, honorable Mayors and colleagues of Europe,

Climate change remains the fateful issue of our generation. As cities, we have an important role to play.

Today's projections indicate that this year, 2020, is a tipping point for carbon emissions. Unless there is a significant drop in the near future, we will not be able to stop the planet's temperature reaching critical levels.

It is of course a good thing that the EU and President Von der Leyen have just raised the level of ambition for Europe. But if the world is to succeed in reaching the global goals, cities in developed regions need to set their sights even higher.

And we in the City of Helsingborg have done just that. Our goal has been to become climate-neutral by 2035, and now we are discussing how we can go one step further and become climate-positive. Let us Race to Zero!

We believe that to accelerate change and do what has to be done, we have to focus our efforts on one thing – innovation.

And in this work, Helsingborg has taken the lead. The city has made a bold and courageous decision to launch a city-wide innovation initiative of a scale not seen before in Sweden. Actually, the European commission announced Helsingborg as one of Europe's most innovative cities just a couple of weeks ago.

We have opened up the entire city as a test bed for collaborating on solutions to global challenges. And we are inviting the world to use our city as a city-testbed for exponential climate action.

We have transformed our landfill into a unique innovation park for circularity. Because in Helsingborg, we believe in treating waste like gold.

By focusing on innovative separation processes, waste is simply resources waiting to be put into good use! As a matter of fact, we are reusing or recycling 99 % of all the waste in Helsingborg.

We are also separating our wastewater and food waste using a three-pipe sewer system, which has attracted the attention of researchers and city changers across the world. And also awards.

This is all about circularity that needs to become a way of life – for people, for cities, for the world. And solutions to achieve circularity all begins with innovation.

This is the future. And Europe's competitiveness will be determined by how we as cities push the boundaries of innovation together. Today, we have an opportunity to craft recovery that strengthens quality of life and rebuild our economies so they are more equitable, and fight climate change.

We need to stand united, not competing but instead collaborating and co-creating. And it all starts with us, mayors. It's all about our engagement in being a part of changing the world. I am here today for exactly that reason! So let's use our combined strengths to create local solutions that create real change on a global level.

We owe this to the planet, and future generations. Thank you.