

**Opening** Ceremony of Metropolis  
12 May 2005

**Speech** delivered by the Governing Mayor of Berlin, Klaus Wowereit

*Speech as delivered*

I greet you all very warmly on the occasion of the opening of the 8th World Congress of Metropolis and, on behalf of the Senate of Berlin, bid you a hearty welcome in the German capital.

This Congress with around 500 participants from 114 cities is offering all of us a major platform for interchange and cooperation. I am firmly convinced: Every city brings its own experiences to this event from which others are able to learn. For one thing is certain: it is metropolises that are crucial to the future. In nearly all fields of life, big cities are a powerhouse for their societies.

We are glad to have the world as a guest here. We are pleased to see Berlin in the centre of consultations between professionals from the political arena, from business, science and the public administration.

Be it in science and research, culture and education or in the fields of security and sustainable development: In all these fields, trends of the future are to be seen in big cities first. Sure enough, every city has its own opportunities and problems. Every metropolis is a unique specimen. And yet there are challenges that we share at the beginning of the 21st century. One of these challenges represents sustainable development of our cities.

That is a question of ecology, of environmental compatibility of our modern urban way of life. It is a question of economic power.

And that is a question of how we succeed in metropolises to ensure peaceful coexistence of people having a highly different cultural background. How to succeed to organise our cities in a way that diversity is not conceived as a threat but as an opportunity by its inhabitants. Or how the American sociologist Richard Sennett stated recently: "That diversity of urban life becomes a source of joint strength instead of a source of mutual alienation and resentment of citizens".

Every single city that is represented here disposes of a wealth of experiences with regard to all these issues. And I am very pleased that you have come to Berlin to discuss together the topic "Tradition and transformation – the future of our city". Berlin is a perfect place for such a discourse.

History is alive In Berlin. At the same time the city is on the move The face of the city has undergone great changes in the years since German reunification. As Germany's capital it has become once again the seat of parliament and the government. Entire districts have been created from scratch. New companies have invested in Berlin and are shaping its transformation from a traditional industrial city into a metropolis characterised more and more by service providers.

Berlin is an exciting cultural metropolis whose openness has great appeal especially for young people from all over the world. Europe's unification is moving Berlin to the very heart of the European Union. Its advantageous geographic location in the midst of Europe opens up a wide range of possibilities – especially in a city in which thousands of people speak the languages of our Central and Eastern European neighbours.

Berlin is a cosmopolitan city, where people from more than 180 nations live in peaceful coexistence. And we want it to stay this way. That is why we face the challenge of immigration. And in the word of Richard Sennett I can state: tolerance in dealing with differences is important and a precious good, but tolerance in itself is not sufficient. What matters is integrating migrants actively into all fields of life – the political economic and societal field. And it is a huge challenge we have to rise to. It is only by following this way that integration can succeed, and that a kind of common ground can be created. – a “corporate identity” in a city characterised by many and wide differences.

Ladies and gentlemen, it gives me a particular pleasure to see in our midst around 75 representatives of our young generation from all over the world who are participating in the Youth Congress. It is they who can make a difference. And it is important for them to be given the opportunity to learn at an early stage to look beyond their national agenda and to enter into a dialogue with other people.

Similarly, I am delighted that around 100 women have come to Berlin in connexion with Metropolis with a view to setting up the international women's network of big metropolises. A warm welcome!

Finally, many thanks to the federal government and private sponsors of the Congress. Without their help we would not be in a position to host this Congress.

The Congress of Metropolis 2005 is providing all of us with the opportunity of sharing our views on how to solve fundamental problems issues of today's large cities. These range from economic challenges to approaches to stabilising disadvantaged neighbourhoods, the active protection of the environment, and ways of dealing with the increase in the volume of traffic. Metropolis 2005 will be an excellent platform to share experiences regarding the sustainable development of metropolitan areas. At the same time, the Congress will offer a wide variety of opportunities to establish business contacts.

I wish you many interesting conversations and I also wish you will have the time to discover the beautiful city of Berlin. It is worthwhile.