

58th BRUSSELS CONGRESS 2022 - OPENING WELCOME TO PLENARY AND RECEPTION AT BRUSSELS CITY HALL**SPECIAL KEY ADDRESS****FROM THE 2007 ANTWERP CONGRESS TO THE 2022 BRUSSELS CONGRESS - A TALE OF TWO CAPITAL CITIES****PIERRE LACONTE, FORMER ISOCARP PRESIDENT AND CHAIR OF ANTWERP CONGRESS 2007**

Dear Ministers, dear Mayor, dear Executive Director of UN-HABITAT, dear colleagues,

Our King Leopold II used to say “Bruxelles est La Capitale mais Anvers est Le Capital”.

Both cities successfully illustrate significant achievements in professional planning, of consequence both to this country and to the international scene.

Let me give four examples.

The PORT of ANTWERP, which is now the Port of Antwerp-Bruges, has become a major hub of the European chemical industry.

It has largely succeeded in eliminating the use of lorries for transporting liquids and fuels from one plant to another. How? By building a network of more than 1000 km of underwater pipes – comparable the Nord Stream - using some 60 different types of inter-plant connections, vastly increasing capacity, and reducing the fossil energy use, pollution, and operating costs of all plants in the hub.

ANTWERP's 1905 railway terminus has been replaced by a four-level international through-station, linking all modes of transport while fully respecting its architectural heritage and achieving the rehabilitation of its surroundings. It is now on the World Heritage list.

Meanwhile BRUSSELS planned a major urban transformation by concentrating new development around the former industrial canal. This “Plan-Canal” received the ISOCARP 2017 Award. It is presently being fully implemented. Our 2022 Congress is being held in one of its most iconic buildings, the former Maritime railway station. The exchange of goods arriving by rail and ship from all over the world is has been replaced by the exchange of ideas and by professional exhibitions and leisure activities, not forgetting housing. The planned residential development of the former railway yards covers some 350,000 sq m.

East of Brussels, the NEW LOUVAIN university town, planned and built from scratch, now ranks alongside historic university towns such as medieval Louvain/Leuven.

Turning to the future... the challenge faced by the Congress that starts today is daunting, both at world level and for Belgium.

How to link better health and the lengthening of life with material prosperity, while also meeting the looming threat of Daniel Cohen's “Homo Numericus”?

How can smart and sustainable cities also become healthy cities? That is the question for these three Congress days.

Best wishes to you all.

