

**Speech, VNG - CERM Conference in the City of The Hague, 29 November 2007 by HRH Prince Constantijn of the Netherlands, Chairman of the Board of 'The Hague Process on Refugees and Migration' Foundation.**

You will be spending these two days discussing the text of a possible Declaration of The Hague. Five years ago, another Declaration was adopted here in The Hague, which is why the organisers asked me to address this conference. The 2002 Declaration was the product of intense collaboration among over 700 experts and stakeholders from all over the world to map the great variety of issues related to migration and refugees. In 2002 the question before us was this: what use is a declaration if no action follows? So a foundation and a think tank were set up to develop ideas and concrete projects to provide new insights into this complex policy field, to engage new actors like business and large cities and to inform and support the global debate on migration, refugees and development.

This resulted, for example, in the multidisciplinary Big Cities initiative, which engages some 40 cities, with The Hague, Johannesburg, Los Angeles, Turin, Lyon and recently Copenhagen as leading actors. Some are present here today. Without going into detail about this project, all I will say is that it is an exciting attempt to exchange good practice between a selection of cities worldwide on dealing with the influx and residence of migrants, and to develop shared policy principles, which are broadly reflected in the draft declaration that is being drawn up today and tomorrow.

Why would a network organisation such as THP get involved with municipal government? For one, our board member Mayor Wim Deetman is a forceful advocate of the City and its specific responsibility towards all its inhabitants. He has demonstrated this in his own city of The Hague and, as is evident today, he actively promotes his ideas and actions abroad. But more importantly, the effects of globalisation are most evident in cities. Cities are becoming the laboratories for migration and integration policies, thus providing interesting insights into concrete migration-related issues and possible ways of dealing with them. Cities absorb the most migrants and need to deal with their integration into host communities. Here the difference is made between empowerment of people and their marginalisation. Here talent is developed or wasted. Here migration enriches or impoverishes society. Here the choice is made between dialogue and interaction or polarisation.

The big challenge lies in rapid demographic change – especially in Europe. The percentage of ethnic minority Dutch people in Rotterdam, for example, increased from 35.5% in 1995 to 45.7% in 2005. By January 2006, almost half of the residents in our largest cities, Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague, and Utrecht, were of foreign origin. In the foreseeable future, first and second generation immigrants will most likely be in the majority there. By 2050 it can be expected that immigrants and their offspring will constitute almost one third of the total population, some 55 per cent of whom will be of non-western origin. This will affect the large cities more than other parts of the country – with a further concentration of problems in particular areas and neighbourhoods.

Figures from abroad are also eye-openers:

49 per cent of Toronto's population were born outside of Canada. Between 2001 and 2005, the Toronto area attracted an average of 107,000 international immigrants each year. In Europe, one out of four Londoners today is foreign-born. These are among the cities one finds on a world map<sup>i</sup> where Dubai (82% foreign-born!) or Tel Aviv (approximately 36%) could just as easily be mentioned.

Thus for anyone involved in policymaking in the field of migration, integration and participation, the city is an essentially important context to be aware of, to learn from and to engage in seeking sustainable solutions.

Allow me to use the rest of this presentation to elaborate on the draft declaration and share some insights from the Hague Process and particularly the Big Cities project. At the outset I want to underline that the challenges involved in migration and integration are manifold and complex. I take the perspective that this is a given, and will not dwell on it. Thus I do not want to belittle the problems, but I want to explore solutions and see how the engagement of migrants in our cities may be more successful for both the host communities and the migrants themselves; and possibly also for the countries of origin.

This conference is important as it attempts to find a shared language and pragmatic solutions to address common challenges across Europe. The draft declaration serves to capture this ambition, putting **Active Citizenship** at the centre. It arguably places a strong emphasis on the responsibilities of individuals, regardless of their nationality, origin or background. Responsibility for shaping one's direct social environment, to engage and participate, to be involved. But I read this not as a call to off-load responsibility onto the migrant; I take this as a commitment of local government to enable all citizens to actively pursue their rights and obligations; to develop and exploit their talents and opportunities. In doing so local government has a facilitating role; as enabler of access to education

and work and to public services, promoter of opportunities and as active broker of the interests of the stakeholders involved.

Let me briefly address some of the concepts that the Declaration advocates. I would like first to suggest that the Declaration contains 3 layers;

- 1) The overarching concept is the Active Citizen, which implies:
  - Ensuring equality of rights and obligations for all
- 2) Critical factors to enable active participation are:
  - Provision of access (to education, employment, public services)
  - Empowerment (in short: providing the tools)
- 3) Which in turn requires a diverse set of strategies involving:
  - Shared responsibility
  - Coordination and partnership
  - Removal of barriers to full participation
  - Appropriate financial and human resources at municipal level

Allow me to briefly explore these points.

#### 1) The Active citizen in the inclusive City: **Citizenship/ Rights and Obligations**

The Declaration takes the position that all residents matter to the community and that they have rights and obligations. This implies a social contract between the government and the people active within the municipal boundaries, which sets out to enable active participation of all in this society. A number of cities across the globe have formalised such contracts and developed a long-term shared vision. Interesting examples include Johannesburg (South Africa) Montreal (Canada) and in Europe Barcelona (Spain), Birmingham (UK) and also The Hague (the Netherlands).<sup>ii</sup>

The critical exercise of defining rights and obligations within the urban context is still in its infancy. This is apparent in the emerging debates and exchanges around a notion of a “right to the city”. Part of the answers may lie with the Human Rights framework, as its universality ensures a solid basis to define and shape an inclusive society and city respectful of cultural diversity but resolute in its opposition to absolute cultural relativism. Rather than definite answers, this framework can and should provide guidance in defining common space and rules, thus responding to the pressing issues which unfold in the city (i.e. effective access to primary education and health care, response to xenophobia, racial discrimination and violence, practices such as forced marriages or excision, exploitation).

#### 2) Critical factors to enable active participation are **access and empowerment**

These two notions are key for a city as an engine for social dynamism, functioning as a social ladder – the image used by Mayor Deetman in our initiative. This is about ensuring access to public services and the ability to use them effectively in order to fully develop the existing human capital. Building on the preliminary results of our initiative I would like to emphasise the importance of education and work as key factors in facilitating participation and integration.

[Access to education](#) is instrumental in building and nurturing shared values, a culture of mutual respect and informed citizenship. A recent OECD report (2006) sheds some important light on the role of policy in the effectiveness of migrants in education. Those systems that invest early, actively address specific barriers to success, and manage to harness the intrinsic motivation of the migrant pupil have demonstrated the possibility of overcoming the structural disadvantage that migrants face. The report indicates that policy makes a difference and that high levels of immigration do not necessarily impair integration or lower overall performance of the educational system.

In the Netherlands we have seen the performance of immigrants in the education system gradually improve over the years, and the gap between minority and majority groups narrow. While this is encouraging, the difference in performance at all levels of education – primary, secondary, and higher education – is still too great, and this must therefore remain an area of constant attention.

#### [Employment](#) as a key driver

Work brings independence, and (possibly) self-esteem, and provides a context for integration. Achievement is the key to building successful migrant identities that comprise a positive mix of elements from the country of origin and residence. Easy access to employment opportunities is a pivotal component for newcomers’ participation in host societies. (While unemployment generates economic insecurity and should be regarded as a fundamental obstacle to social inclusion.) However this positive relationship is dependent on the existence of capacity-building mechanisms, decent working conditions and a work environment open to diversity. Effective

inclusion policies capture and explore the extent to which employment policy is interlocked with other dimensions, particularly housing, health and education.

These can only be achieved in active partnership with stakeholders; like the business community and healthcare and education professionals – and the migrants themselves. Which brings us to the third layer, which consists of the enabling factors for access and empowerment.

- *Shared responsibility*
- *Coordination and partnership*
- *Removal of barriers to full participation*
- *Appropriate financial and human resources at municipal level*

As I have touched on this already I would like to start with:

#### [Shared responsibilities, coordination and partnerships](#)

There are persisting gaps in what the various levels of the public sector can achieve or undertake. This calls for more support for neighbourhood processes and citizen-led initiatives. These initiatives bring tangible results and can often achieve greater sustainability than those initiated in a more top-down fashion by municipalities. In addition, the process is likely to reinforce ownership and participation which are critical success factors for an inclusive approach to citizenship. Along with other cities, the city of The Hague is taking a pioneering role in that field with its Citizenship Fund.<sup>iii</sup>

Beyond the involvement of citizens themselves, there is unexplored potential in concluding voluntary agreements with non-governmental and community organisations and the private sector. These **partnerships** allow public authorities to build on the capacity of community organisations as intermediaries and more largely on the available expertise of NGOs.

#### [Removal of barriers to full participation](#)

Accepting that migrants and refugees face specific challenges and addressing these is an absolute prerequisite for effective policymaking, but it requires political courage. These barriers are manifold. For newcomers they include discrimination, lack of experience in the host country, lack of effective networks and social capital, lack of recognition of qualifications and, obviously, linguistic skills.

I am particularly grateful that the declaration makes explicit mention of the role of migrant women as catalysts for integration (inclusion and participation); and the specific challenges that they face. Their role within the community cannot be underestimated; whilst the obstacles they face in accessing the labour market cannot be overemphasised, particularly in less skilled jobs.

Possible measures include efforts to gain a common understanding of the structural dimension of discrimination and of systemic barriers, training of city officials; cooperation with human rights and anti-discrimination institutions to promote local rights-based approaches; and promotion of diversity to foster engagement of all stakeholders concerned.

Furthermore, national and international platforms offer a series of opportunities for cities to compare, evaluate and improve their practices in countering racism and discrimination; to increase the visibility and transparency of their own initiatives vis-à-vis the city residents; and to strengthen existing ties and explore new solutions. One example is the UNESCO International Coalition of Cities against Racism and its European Action Plan.

**Proactive measures** are necessary to break down the barriers to effective equal opportunities in access to employment. This demands a commitment to addressing the protection and empowerment gaps for the most vulnerable; and to ensuring the exemplary role of the city government as employer, contracting authority and catalyst in launching debate, but also as a supporter of diversity practices by the private sector and other stakeholders. The city of Lyon, France took action with the signing of a national Charter for Diversity together with local businesses.

Examples of solutions at the local level include:

- Securing internship opportunities for students with an immigrant background, thus taking action to ensure equal opportunities at an early stage. (Haagse Hogeschool / Businesses)
- Developing job squads as an innovative outreach tool to break isolation in neighbourhoods with high unemployment rates. In the city of Rotterdam, specialised intervention teams visit low-income earners to help them to apply for jobs and fill out forms for additional welfare assistance.
- Strengthening the capacities of training centres and other dedicated structures playing a pivotal role in the necessary acquisition or recognition of skills and credentials and offering an integrated pathway to the labour market (i.e. CBSI Language, Training and Integration Centre, Municipality of Copenhagen)

Finally, such **proactive policymaking** comes at a cost, for which sufficient financial resources must be found. Or actually it should be perceived as an investment, which should reap important returns in the future, through better integration, more socio-economic dynamism, and less pressure on support structures like social security and unemployment benefit – also in subsequent generations.

Being proactive also requires coordination between municipal, regional and national governments. The CEMR Declaration of Seville refers to this challenge. Some local governments have engaged in a variety of such modes of dialogue (memorandum of understanding, regular consultations). Key is to cooperate and pool resources in more systematic ways,<sup>iv</sup> whilst at the same time defining clear boundaries to the mandates of the different levels of government.

## CONCLUSION

The points raised in the programme represent a formidable challenge. We can compliment the organisers on their courage in attempting to address these challenges. And in fact we/you have no choice. The very real problems related to migration will not go away if we close our eyes to the plight of migrants in our societies. Migrants will keep coming and we will come to depend on them. It is only commonsense to engage these people and to ensure that they can exploit their talents for their own benefit and that of our societies and economies.

But words are one thing and the challenge will be, beyond the vision and discourse, to implement this inclusive approach to active citizenship and effective empowerment of all city residents. Cities, regardless of their level of development, share an invariable potential to be forefront laboratories of social change. Let us explore and make use of this potential, with an ambitious view to highlighting avenues for the more extensive remodelling of our societies, to meet the challenges of the 21st century.

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NOTES

**Table 2** Top 25 cities by percent foreign-born

	City	Year	City Population	FB Population	% FB
1	Dubai	2002	857,233	702,931	82.00
2	Miami	2000	2,253,362	1,147,765	50.94
3	Amsterdam	2002	735,328	347,634	47.28
4	Toronto	2001	4,647,960	2,091,100	44.99
5	Muscat	2000	661,000	294,881	44.61
6	Vancouver	2001	1,967,475	767,715	39.02
7	Auckland	2001	367,737	143,417	39.00
8	Geneva	2002	427,700	164,118	38.37
9	Mecca	1996	4,467,670	1,686,595	37.75
10	The Hague	1995	441,595	161,509	36.57
11	Los Angeles	2000	9,519,338	3,449,444	36.24
12	Tel Aviv	2002	2,075,500	747,400	36.01
13	Kiev	1992	2,616,000	941,760	36.00
14	Medina	2000	5,448,773	1,893,213	34.75
15	New York	2000	9,314,235	3,139,647	33.71
16	San Francisco	2000	1,731,183	554,819	32.05
17	Riyadh	2000	4,730,330	1,477,601	31.24
18	Perth	2001	1,336,239	422,547	31.62
19	Sydney	2001	3,961,451	1,235,908	31.20
20	Jerusalem	2002	678,300	208,700	30.77
21	Melbourne	2001	3,367,169	960,145	28.51
22	Frankfurt	2000	650,705	181,184	27.84
23	Tbilisi	1999	1,339,105	370,932	27.70
24	London	2001	7,172,091	1,940,390	27.05
2	Brussels	2002	978,384	260,040	26.58
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Source: Authors using data from numerous national census statistics (for a complete listing of all data, see <http://gwstudynet.com/gum>)

Doc 2005 – George Washington University- Gum project

<sup>ii</sup> Johannesburg, South Africa: Human Development Strategy 2005

[http://www.joburg.org.za/city\\_vision/hr\\_strategy-05.pdf](http://www.joburg.org.za/city_vision/hr_strategy-05.pdf)

Montreal, Canada: Charter of Rights and Responsibilities

<http://www2.ville.montreal.qc.ca/ocpm/pdf/references/chartes/charte1en.pdf>

Barcelona, Spain: Local inclusion plan (Acord ciutadana per una Barcelona Inclusiva):

<http://www.bcn.es/barcelonainclusiva/>

Birmingham, UK Community Cohesion Strategy

[http://64.233.183.104/search?q=cache:6u-](http://64.233.183.104/search?q=cache:6u-PKeo5U0wJ:www.birmingham.gov.uk/ELibrary%3FE_LIBRARY_ID%3D558+community+cohesion+strategy+birmingham&hl=nl)

[PKeo5U0wJ:www.birmingham.gov.uk/ELibrary%3FE\\_LIBRARY\\_ID%3D558+community+cohesion+strategy+birmingham&hl=nl&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=fr](http://64.233.183.104/search?q=cache:6u-PKeo5U0wJ:www.birmingham.gov.uk/ELibrary%3FE_LIBRARY_ID%3D558+community+cohesion+strategy+birmingham&hl=nl&ct=clnk&cd=1&gl=fr)

<sup>iii</sup> **THE CITIZENSHIP FUND INITIATIVE, CITY OF THE HAGUE, NETHERLANDS**

Introduced in 2007, the Citizenship Fund makes one million euros available every year for citizens' projects to improve quality of life in their neighbourhoods and/or to build bridges between population groups. There are some rules for selection:

The plan must be supported by at least 10 citizens (here understood as residents) who must be willing to carry out their plan themselves, if necessary with some professional support. Encounter, dialogue and preferably also active cooperation between different population groups should be a crucial aspect of the plan. For every ambitious and sustainable plan a maximum grant available of 25,000 euros is available.

Every year, an independent committee makes a selection of the best projects that have been submitted for a contribution from the Citizenship Fund. The people of The Hague vote to decide which of the nominated projects will be given the Citizenship

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Award. This makes the Citizenship Award into a people's prize, a prize awarded by citizens to the project that in their opinion has contributed most to quality of life and to building bridges between population groups.

The first Citizenship Award was assigned to the Central Laak Neighbourhood Association, Laak being a multi-cultural blue-collar neighbourhood close to The Hague city centre. The Neighborhood Association and its partners, including schools, welfare organisations and the public library, organised a cultural week for all 3000 primary school children in the district.

For more information:

<http://www.denhaag.nl> ( Fonds Burgerschap)

<sup>iv</sup> Example of TORONTO

THE CANADA-ONTARIO-TORONTO MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING (MOU) ON IMMIGRATION AND SETTLEMENT

#### Preamble

The Canada-Ontario-Toronto Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Immigration and Settlement is an important provision under the Canada-Ontario Immigration Agreement for partnerships with municipal governments in Ontario on immigration matters. The MOU establishes a framework for the federal, provincial and municipal governments to discuss matters related to immigration and settlement in the City of Toronto. It focuses on improving outcomes for immigrants through several areas of interest to all three governments, including citizenship and civic engagement, and facilitating access to employment, services, and educational and training opportunities.

In the past five years, up to 50% of all immigrants to Canada have arrived in the Toronto area alone each year. The City of Toronto has developed expertise and community infrastructure to respond to immigrants' integration needs, and plays a vital role in the development of settlement programs and services.

For more information:

<http://www.cic.gc.ca/english/about/laws-policy/agreements/ontario/can-ont-toronto-mou.asp>