

## **Press the button for a healthier future!**

### **Velo-city 2011 Seville Conference opens with political powerhouse Gro Harlem Brundtland, former Norwegian Prime Minister. ECF President Manfred Neun encourages framework for “Cycling Economy”**

Seville, March 24, 2011 – Yesterday, master of Ceremonies, Guillermo (Gil) Peñalosa opened the 17th Velo-city Conference in Seville, Spain. Seville, the host city was awarded the UN Habitat Best Practice Award for the successful creation of a safe and segregated cycling infrastructure.



Peñalosa, welcomed the more than 900 participants from 47 countries spanning five continents. He was joined in his welcome by the organizing dignitaries, ECF president Manfred Neun, the Mayor of Seville Sánchez Monteseirín; Jesús Huertas García from the Ministry of Environment and Rural and Marine Affairs Government of Spain; Mr. José

Juan Díaz Trillo, Minister of Environment, Regional government of Andalusia, and Mr. Antonio Rodrigo Torrijos, First Deputy Mayor of Seville.

The powerful and inspiring opening speech delivered by former prime minister of Norway, Mrs. Gro Harlem Brundtland was a clear invitation to the Velo-city 2011 audience to be aware and actively involved in finding solutions to the seemingly insurmountable challenges that we face today. In 1987, Brundtland - a political powerhouse— authored one of the most influential and renowned U.N. reports ever published titled “Our common future”.

The Brundtland report actually still carries a punch and although much has been accomplished, she points out that inclusive and comprehensive processes are still very much needed – processes spanning the private and public sectors – to accomplish the ultimate goals set out in the report. She warns that the trends are still unsustainable, the climate threat real and urgent, and our common ability and shared responsibility still lacking to secure the changes that we all depend upon.

Brundtland points out that the Rio slogan “Think Globally and Act Locally” although inspiring and to the point, perhaps could also have been exchanged for a quite powerful and relevant – “Act Globally and Think Locally”. Seville is a perfect example of this practice – within a mere three years the city has re-invented itself and established an urban environment that truly improves the quality of life for all its citizens.



She explained: "Above and beyond what all of us can contribute to more sustainable cities and other local communities, we also need to act globally. In our globalized world, the threats we face are interconnected. That is why today, we must respond to Global Health challenges as robustly as we do to terrorism. To poverty and to environmental threats as robustly as we do to nuclear proliferation."

The bicycle, improved cycling infrastructure, and the promotion of cycling itself can and will indeed be starting points for social and economic change impacting problems such as our energy dependency, climate change, obesity and road safety.

"The time is right", echoed ECF president, Manfred Neun. "The global problems facing us are now bigger than ever. After listening to Gro Brundtlands passionate plea, I am sure that you will all agree, and I invite you all now present at Velo-city 2011 to make use of this opportunity; with our gathered expertise - 'the bicycle and cycling' – we can indeed be of help in solving some of the world's most pressing problems."

Manfred Neun, president of the European Cycling Federation explained that it is time to go Global. An increased worldwide demand for cycling expertise and cycling advocacy requires us to shoulder our responsibilities and intensify our cycling advocacy work globally.

"To this day," he continued, "the 'Cycling Economy' is an unfamiliar term in the political arena as it is within the bicycle industry itself. Considered small business, the 'Cycling Economy' has never properly gotten off the ground due to a few persistent misconceptions. It is erroneously thought that there is a permanent lack of market volume, that cycling is cheap – no money to be made, there is no political classification, and the low status of cycling to mention just a few."

Quite to the contrary, the five assets of the 'Cycling Economy', according to Neun, are related to the five challenges we that we currently face. Not necessarily in this order these are our dependency on fossil energy, transport efficiency, climate change, health and the increased growth of our cities and the quality of urban living.

In his outline of a framework for a 'Cycling Economy' Neun presented the Velo-city audience with nine buttons to be pressed, offering solutions and chances for investment. Among others these 'buttons' offer ideas and solutions regarding energy efficiency, cycling tourism and electric assisted bicycles.

Cities that create a cycling friendly environment not only offer their citizens a much higher and healthier quality of life, they also effectively lower the cost of public transportation and as a result local and regional businesses prosper.

Neun believes that the 'Cycling Economy' offers enormous potential. It is an investment that is required by society as a whole. Now more than ever, Cycling

Economy is needed, it is the framework to establish a sustainable global policy. Seville is a prime example of how the investment in cycling infrastructure and the promotion of cycling offers public health, economic and environmental benefits across the board!

He finished, "So let Velo-city 2011 be remembered as the conference where we pressed the button of positive change by drafting this effective framework for a 'Cycling Economy'.

Let us agree that NOW is the time for action - action speaks louder than words!

This call to action will be integrated in the Charter of Seville- a Velo-city 2011 closing document outlining the intentions and agreements reached in Seville - that will be presented at and address the participants of International Transport Forum in Leipzig, this May. The Charter of Seville will be presented during the plenary session on Friday, the 25th.

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## **About Velo-city**

*The Velo-city conference series is the premier international cycling planning conference series in the world, organized by the European Cyclists' Federation (ECF) and select host cities.*

*Velo-city conferences serve as a global communications and information platform and target to influence decision makers, and improve the planning and provision of infrastructure for the daily use of the bicycle in an urban environment.*

*The conferences traditionally involve experts, representatives of associations, institutions, policy-makers and social agents, universities and companies.*

*More information [www.ecf.com](http://www.ecf.com)*

## **Velo-city 2011 Seville – The Cycle of Life**

*The city of Seville, which was just awarded a UN-Habitat Best Practice Award, has been chosen to host the 2011 edition of Velo-city as a result of its successful establishment of a complete system of cycling infrastructures.*

*Velo-city 2011 expects to welcome more than 1,000 visitors from all over the world who – during the three-day conference – will highlight cycling as a means of urban sustainable transport. The conference will look into a breadth of subjects on Health, Education, Efficiency of public investment, Economic impact and employment.*

*Out of the more than 250 submissions that were received from 27 countries, 120 entries will be selected, to be presented and discussed in plenary and sub-plenary sessions, workshops and round table sessions. An exhibition related to urban cycling will supplement and compliment the conference.*

*The conference slogan, "The Cycle of Life", refers to the bicycle as a part of everyday life and a source of health for people of any age, contributing to more inhabitable cities and urban regions.*

This year's Velo-city Conference will take place in Seville from March 23–25, 2011.

The official languages during the conference will be Spanish and English.

For more information and registration: [www.velo-city2011.com](http://www.velo-city2011.com)

Media registration is open until March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

For a selection of images and logos go to

[http://www.velo-city2011.com/eng/informacion\\_interes.php](http://www.velo-city2011.com/eng/informacion_interes.php) or

<http://sevillacyclechic.blogspot.com/>

Feel free to contact us for further information or images.

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