

Ladies and Gentlemen
Honoured guests,

On behalf of the City of Turku it gives me great pleasure to wish you all cordially welcome to Turku, or Åbo as we are called in Swedish. As Finland's oldest town we have during our history been called with different epithets such as Finland's Gateway to the West or the Cradle of Culture in Finland.

I was glad to see that the Nordic Catalysis Society had in their invitation to this congress paraphrased it to the "Cradle of Chemistry in Finland".

As you all know, catalysis has deep roots in Northern Europe as it started in Sweden in 1835 when Jöns Jacob Berzelius in his "Annual Report" critically reviewed the scientific work done about a number of reactions which take place in the presence of some substance which remains unaffected.

The concept of catalysis was born as the acceleration of a chemical reaction by means of a substance, called a catalyst, not consumed by the overall reaction.

We who do not work in chemistry call anything that accelerates a reaction, without itself being consumed or changed, a "catalyst", for example, a "catalyst for political change". Cities as Catalysts participate in reactions but are neither reactants nor products of the reaction they catalyze

The city can also act as a catalyst between universities and business life in the area. Today cities compete both domestically and internationally. This requires networking and good international contacts. Your congress is a good example of both.

In 1640 Finland's first university was founded in Turku. Today we have 3 universities and Finland's biggest polytechnic. Many things and new ideas have come to Finland through Turku.

I know that Catalysis is important in many aspects of environmental science, from the catalytic converter in automobiles to the causes of the ozone hole.

The ozone hole is something that it is difficult for a layman to understand, but sailing in the polluted Baltic Sea is something that anyone can understand as a problem. Therefore I hope that your work will find practical solutions to the problems involved in the question of how to produce environmentally friendly products to reduce the amount of waste generated.

I wish the conference all the best and hope that we can show that Turku of today has proceeded from being the cradle of chemistry and culture into a city which proudly can call it European Capital of Culture in 2011. Your conference will help us on our way there.

You are cordially welcome !