

PROFESSOR ROSENBAUM, THANK YOU FOR YOUR KIND INTRODUCTION.

I ALSO WANT TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR WORK IN PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION AND YOUR ROLE IN SHAPING THE NEXT GENERATION OF PUBLIC SERVANTS.

AND BEFORE I BEGIN, I WANT TO GIVE A SPECIAL THANKS TO SENATOR JAVIER SOUTO WHOSE LEADERSHIP AND LOVE FOR CITIES INSPIRED THIS CONFERENCE.

ON BEHALF OF MAYOR CARLOS GIMENEZ, IT'S ALWAYS A PLEASURE TO WELCOME MAYORS AND LOCAL ELECTED OFFICIALS TO OUR COMMUNITY.

NO MATTER WHERE WE COME FROM, AND NO MATTER THE SIZE OF OUR CITIES, WE SHARE MANY THINGS IN COMMON.

THOSE OF US IN MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ALL UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER.

AND WE UNDERSTAND THAT WE ARE DEALING WITH THE ISSUES THAT AFFECT PEOPLE MOST CLOSELY ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS.

WE ARE THE ONES WHO ARE COMING UP WITH THE SOLUTIONS TO THE PROBLEMS OUR PEOPLE FACE.

JUST CONTRAST THIS WITH WHAT IS HAPPENING IN NATIONAL POLITICS.

IN OUR COUNTRY, THE NATIONAL POLITICS ARE SO GRIDLOCKED THAT IT'S HARD TO IMAGINE ANY SOLUTIONS COMING OUT OF WASHINGTON D.C.

IN FACT, A MAJOR NEWSPAPER RECENTLY CALLED WASHINGTON "THE WORLD'S CAPITAL OF GRIDLOCK."

I AM REMINDED HOW LAST YEAR BECAUSE OF THIS GRIDLOCK, THE U.S. GOVERNMENT SHUT DOWN FOR ALMOST TWO WEEKS

THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SHUT DOWN – JUST CLOSED ITS DOORS!

BUT, HERE IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY...

GARBAGE WAS PICKED UP AND OUR STREETS REMAINED CLEAN.

POLICE AND FIRE FIRST RESPONDERS KEPT OUR CITIZENS SAFE.

OUR ROADS AND BRIDGES WERE OPEN.

BUSES AND OTHER PUBLIC TRANSIT TOOK PEOPLE TO AND FROM WORK.

QUITE SIMPLY, LIFE WENT ON.

NOW, IMAGINE IF ANY OF OUR CITIES WERE TO SHUT DOWN...

NO ONE HAS TO TELL US WHAT WOULD HAPPEN.

AT THE MUNICIPAL LEVEL, THINGS ARE VERY DIFFERENT.

AMONG SCHOLARS LIKE PROFESSOR ROSENBAUM AND OTHERS WHO ARE ENGAGED IN URBAN RESEARCH, THERE IS A GROWING SENSE OF POLITICAL EXCITEMENT.

A RETURN TO “CITY-STATES.”

CITIES ARE SEIZING THE INITIATIVE AND BECOMING THE CENTERS FOR INNOVATION.

WE ARE THE NEW SOURCES OF HOPE.

A SERIES OF NEW STUDIES AND BOOKS ARE ALL POINTING TO A RISE IN THE POWER AND STATURE OF CITIES.

AMONG THESE BOOKS, THERE IS ONE THAT WAS PUBLISHED JUST LAST YEAR WRITTEN BY URBAN SCHOLAR BENJAMIN BARBER, AND IT HAS A GREAT TITLE:

“IF MAYORS RULED THE WORLD.”

WELL, WHAT IF MAYORS DID IN FACT RULE THE WORLD?

JUDGING FROM THE ATTENDANCE AND GATHERING OF MAYORS AND LOCAL OFFICIALS WE HAVE WITH US TODAY, AND THE DEPTH OF ISSUES YOU ARE SET TO DISCUSS, THIS MAY WELL BE A VERY GOOD THING!

WHEN IT COMES TO THE ISSUES THAT MATTER MOST TO PEOPLE...

EDUCATION, ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY, PUBLIC SAFETY, GREATER MOBILITY, THE ENVIRONMENT, TECHNOLOGY –

IT’S MAYORS WHO ARE LEADING THE WAY, AND COMING UP WITH THE MOST INNOVATIVE APPROACHES IN THESE AREAS.

AS THE WORLD BECOMES MORE URBANIZED, AND THE POPULATION OF CITIES CONTINUES TO GROW...

IT WILL BE UP TO MAYORS TO ADDRESS THE NEEDS OF OUR CITIZENS, AND COME UP WITH WAYS TO HELP OUR CITIES MOVE TOWARD THE FUTURE.

TODAY’S GATHERING IS AN EXAMPLE OF THIS.

WE ALSO KNOW THAT FOR THE FIRST TIME IN HISTORY, OVER HALF THE WORLD’S POPULATION LIVES IN URBANIZED AREAS.

IN LATIN AMERICA, YOU ARE EXPERIENCING THIS GROWTH IN A MORE DRAMATIC MANNER, WITH 85% RATE OF URBANIZATION EXPECTED IN THE NEXT DECADE.

AS MORE AND MORE PEOPLE MOVE INTO OUR CITIES, WE ALL FACE THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTION OF HOW TO BALANCE POPULATION GROWTH WITH AN INCREASED NEED IN SERVICES.

AND WE FACE THIS WITH TIGHTER REVENUES AND INCREASED FISCAL AND BUDGETARY PRESSURES.

ALL OF US IN THIS ROOM FACE THIS CHALLENGE.

BUT I HAVE GREAT HOPE THAT WE WILL RISE TO THIS CHALLENGE.

AND WE WILL DO SO BY HARNESSING AND TAKING ADVANTAGE OF THE POWER OF CREATIVITY THAT EXISTS IN EACH OF OUR CITIES.

MAYORS ARE ALWAYS WILLING TO TAP INTO THIS CREATIVITY.

AND I KNOW THAT THIS SAME SPIRIT OF INNOVATION WILL INSPIRE THE DISCUSSIONS THAT WILL TAKE PLACE HERE AMONG YOU.

LET ME FINISH BY ASKING THAT AS YOU ENGAGE IN YOUR DISCUSSIONS, YOU CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING:

HOW CAN WE BEST POSITION OUR CITIES TO OFFER THE MOST POSSIBLE AVENUES FOR ADVANCEMENT?

AND HOW CAN WE MAKE OUR CITIES ATTRACTIVE TO THE FORCES OF CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION?

OUR ANSWER HERE IN MIAMI-DADE COUNTY IS CENTERED ON OUR PEOPLE.

HUMAN CAPITAL IS THE FOUNDATION OF ANY TRANSFORMATIVE MOVEMENT.

THIS IS WHY WE ARE INVESTING IN THE QUALITY OF LIFE AREAS – EDUCATION, PARKS AND GREEN SPACES, ARTS AND CULTURE – THAT ATTRACT TALENTED PEOPLE.

AND THESE INVESTMENTS ARE CARRYING US FORWARD, ALLOWING US TO EMERGE AS ONE OF THE GREAT COMMUNITIES IN THE WORLD.

MIAMI IS A CITY WHERE 60% OF THE POPULATION IS FOREIGN BORN, BUT WE HAVE LEARNED TO BENEFIT FROM THIS DIVERSITY, WORKING TOGETHER TO CREATE THE CITY YOU SEE ALL AROUND YOU TODAY.

WE ARE HERE TO LEARN FROM ONE ANOTHER, AND UNLEASH THE POWER OF CREATIVITY AND INNOVATION THAT WILL CARRY OUR CITIES FORWARD.

AND I THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO WELCOME YOU, AND WISH YOU A POSITIVE AND PRODUCTIVE CONFERENCE.

THANK YOU!