



Press Information

Volvo rewards ideas to make cities people-friendlier environments

For the first time in history, in 2004 the 3.2 billion people living in cities around the globe will outnumber those living rurally. But the growing environmental problems of overcrowding, from air pollution to transportation, are solvable say four of the world's top urbanization experts jointly awarded the 2004 Volvo Environment Prize.

It does not take rocket science to realize the urgent need to rapidly tackle society's growing urban 'ecological footprint' of waste, pollution and congestion. Although the world's population has quadrupled since 1900, the number of people living in cities has jumped a massive fourteen times – from 225 million to 3.2 billion! From just eight cities in the world with populations over five million in 1950, the number has grown to over 41 today and may reach a predicted 59 such cities by 2015, most in the developing countries.

Far from being livable, people-friendly environments, the reality for most frazzled urbanites is characterized by inadequate transportation, water supply and sanitation, serving as powerful generators of social, economic and environmental problems. Of city-dwellers, according to the United Nations, one billion live in urban slums – a figure that unchecked within 30 years could encompass one in every three people on earth.

Problems solvable

The 2004 Volvo Environment Prize recipients are unanimous in their belief that many of the problems caused by mass urbanization are solvable – even if there is no democratic way to halt or slow the inexorable move into cities.

Offering trailblazing research and ideas, the prize winners stress the absolute need for close cooperation and partnerships between authorities, governments and industry in order to overcome seemingly insurmountable problems to shift towards a more sustainable urbanized future. Tangible solutions encompass good urban planning that is holistic in approach encompassing scientific, technical, existing infrastructure, economic, social, and political factors as well more accountable, competent and democratic city authorities.

Leading role for transportation industry

Road, rail and air transportation is generally perceived by the winners of the Volvo Environment Prize as a critical enabler of economic activity as well as being beneficial to social interaction, apart from the environmental issues.

“The transportation industry contributes to global environmental problems, but also offers some of the solutions: Growing globalization and urbanization both bring the need for increased transport. Our challenge is to develop solutions that meet the needs of the future with as little impact on the environment as possible”, says Leif Johannsson President of AB Volvo and CEO of the Volvo Group.

The President and CEO of the Volvo Car Corporation, Hans-Olov Olsson, has a practical response to questions on the key role of car manufacturers in reconciling the issue of unrestricted mobility with that of energy scarcity, air quality and congestion. “Our job as an industry and individual car makers is to deliver an integrated roadmap for the future encompassing cleaner fuels, advanced vehicle technologies and designs, and support for infrastructural and institutional change,” he says.

The winners of the 2004 Volvo Environment Prize are top urbanization specialists Dr David Satterthwaite of the UK, Brazilian Jaime Lerner and the US-based husband and wife team of Dr Mario and Dr Luisa Molina. The SEK 1.5 million prize was created in 1989 to underline Volvo’s commitment to the environment and sustainable development.

To learn more about Volvo’s environmental prize and the laureates, visit our website at www.environment-prize.com.

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