



**International Forum on Use of Underground Space as a Public Policy Tool for Sustainable Urbanisation held on 27th -29th June, 2012 in St. Petersburg**

The purpose of the International Forum is a radical change of an integrated development of underground space in Russian cities, the transition from the practice of indiscriminate construction of underground structures to elaborate models of uderground space use.

The event was organized by the Association of Underground Builders, the Metrostroy Company, the National Association of Builders Committee for the development of underground space, the Tunnel Association of Russia and St. Petersburg research, design and survey Institute of Integrated engineering in metro and other activities Lenmetrogioprotrans».

The forum, backed by the Russian Ministry of Regional Development and the Saint Petersburg city authorities, also enjoyed the support of the International Tunnelling and Underground Space Association (ITA), which was represented officially by Oliver Vion, it's Executive Director, who gave a keynote address on Underground Space in Megacities. Han Admiraal and Antonia Cornaro, of the ITA's Committee on Underground Space (ITACUS), gave lectures on global challenges for urban development and planning issues related to underground space.

The Underground City 2012 Forum in Saint Petersburg was a major event of its kind, aimed at drawing the attention of policy-makers, professionals, and the general public to underground space. The Forum theme, Use of Underground Space as a Public Policy Tool for Sustainable Urbanization, is important for Russia and the world, representing a blend of traditional underground construction issues and different public policy agendas, including sustainable urbanization, socio-economic development, social cohesion and the environment. Director General of the Association and Forum Director Sergey Alpatov, sees the role of The Forum as "realizing the full potential of industry and underground space itself, in terms of creating sustainable and livable cities".

The forum gathered more than 450 participants, representing a variety of professional domains including government bureaucracy, parliament and law, city planning, architecture, economics, the environment, engineering and technology. It offered a one-day plenary session with a concurrent exhibition of urban underground projects and five concurrent technical tracks on the second day comprising city planning; law; environment and energy; technology; and education. Four technical tours were offered on the last day.

The Forum offered a comprehensive discussion on the benefits and concerns related to urban underground space use, featuring such eminent scientists as Prof Aurele Parriaux of EPFL of Lausanne, Switzerland; Prof Ray Sterling of the Associated Research Centers for the Urban

Underground Space (ACUUS); and Prof Andrew Whittle of MIT, Cambridge, USA. Scientists and experts from 15 countries were present at the forum. Among invited talks were presentations by researchers from the Delft University of Technology in The Netherlands (Dr Frank van der Hoeven) and the University of Birmingham, UK (Dr Ian Jefferson), who covered master planning and future research into underground space.

Further challenges lie ahead for city planning. Jury Miterev, the Chief Architect of Saint Petersburg, criticized developers and engineers for a lack of vision and a tendency to propose standard projects that lack imagination and that are not in keeping with the future development of such a unique city. Sharing the city of Moscow experience, Vladimir Korotajev from the Central Research and Design Institute for Urban Planning, reported a booming development of standalone underground facilities - such as parking garages and commercial space - but a lack of cohesive pedestrian networks or integration with existing public transport infrastructure and the city's metro.

There was a strong call by many experts to maintain cohesion of the urban environment, including calls to avoid major traffic routes cutting communities and municipalities in half (Vladimir Korotajev, Russia, and Dr Frank van der Hoeven, The Netherlands). Prof Andrew Whittle (USA) called for the revitalization of urban communities, while Prof Xiao-Zhao Li (China) called on authorities to provide more public space. Developing this theme, Olivier Vion pointed to concrete examples of how urban underground space can provide solutions for tackling urban problems. Prof Sterling and Antonia Cornaro expressed strong concerns about the need for developing plans for underground space use, including three-dimensional masterplans.

In essence, the forum highlighted the opportunities that underground space can provide to improve urban life. Implementation of these opportunities seems to be close at hand, at least in key Russian cities where severe traffic congestion problems, caused by recent booms in private car ownership, leave little alternative other than to develop public transportation and underground infrastructure. Significant business opportunities exist in motor transport infrastructure using public, private, and PPP project finance models. Comprehensive use of urban underground infrastructure in public policy, however, seems somewhat distant; the management of urban sustainability through the utilization of underground space remains principally in the theoretical realm for the time being. Nevertheless widely known and accepted, the Compact City concept enjoys a consensus of opinion that a high quality of life, in a high urban density environment, is only possible with the existence of comprehensive underground infrastructure - a principle resolution agreed upon during the forum.

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