



REGERINGSKANSLIET

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Ladies and gentlemen,

On behalf of the Swedish ministry of the Environment and of the Swedish Environmental Protection Agency, I have the great pleasure of welcoming you to Stockholm and to the 8th meeting of the International Committee on Contaminated Land. It is a great pleasure for us to see such a world wide representation and that such a high number of participants are paying extensive attention to this international platform for discussion of contaminated sites, policies and strategies. We are very happy to announce that more than 55 representatives from 27 different countries have found their way to Stockholm.

International networks and meetings like the present ICCL meeting, are in fact very valuable and effective for sharing information about obtained results and experiences that may be very beneficial to other stakeholders.

Some thirty years ago, or more, land contamination was generally perceived in terms of relatively rare incidents, sometimes with catastrophic consequences for human health and the

environment. Several incidents attracted major attention. As a result, politicians started to respond by seeking risk control. Pollution should be removed or contained. Consequently, today, land contamination is rather perceived as a widespread structural problem of varying intensity and significance, than in terms of severe incidents. Moreover, some of the contaminated areas are a larger threat to the environment than ongoing industrial activities. To obtain a clean environment, it is essential to identify, assess and remediate contaminated areas in an appropriate manner.

Becoming aware of the fact that contamination of land is a prevalent concern has led to a need to elaborate policies to protect soil and groundwater. One example of this is the elaboration of a Thematic Strategy for Soil Protection within the European Union. These days, sustainable development is of great importance. Sustainable development implies a broad view of human welfare, a long term perspective about the consequences of activities, and global co-operation to reach viable solutions. Furthermore, contamination and soil degradation can have a direct impact on water and air quality, biodiversity and climate change - all equally important. Water and soil problems show a quite diverse pattern: Concerning the water we have pollution of our ground-waters, lakes and rivers, but also local and regional scarcity in water, and protection of our waters as a resource. We all need clean water for drinking and bathing as well as we have a need of clean water in rivers, lakes and coastal waters for both humans and the ecosystems. Concerning soil, we find issues such as erosion, landslides, desertification along with soil contamination from point sources and diffuse sources. As a part

of our environment, we ask for cleaner surroundings with non-contaminated soils and waters. Historically, a great deal of the polluting industries were situated in beautiful areas on the coast sides or by rivers and lakes. Today, we look upon these areas as well suited for recreational purposes and habitation.

Furthermore, there is a strong need of strategies for managing legacies from past industrial activities – the “historical” contaminations. We know for a fact that a long history of environmental pollution is archived in soils and sediments. Former industrial areas, contaminated sediments and landfills cause a number of serious problems for land-use and groundwater as well as terrestrial and aquatic ecosystems. It has become a major issue to find solutions which reduce the costs of dealing with land contamination without compromising public health and water quality and the sustainable use of soils.

The issue of locally contaminated soils and groundwater is often considered a national problem. However, the scientific principles for tackling contaminated site problems are not confined to national boundaries. Therefore international co-operation and networking are called for. Moreover, in the field of legislation it is also becoming clear that the protection of the environment is of international interest.

The current ICCL meeting aims at encouraging international co-operation, enhance dialogue and exchange knowledge in the field of contaminated land management and shall contribute to a better understanding of the different interests of various stakeholder-

groups. Experienced countries can benefit from the experience. Not only can we take advantage of technological knowledge or conceptual developments; we can also learn from failures that had to be experienced by some of the pioneers. This is possible through involvement in international network. I am sure that there is quite a number of experiences to be shared and discussed with colleagues in order to find even better solutions to the actual problems in relation to contaminated land.

This meeting of the International Committee on Contaminated Land seek to provide an informal forum for discussion and an opportunity for international exchange and co-operation, to the benefit of all participants.

I am therefore very pleased to officially open this 8th meeting of the ICCL.

Thank you.