My name is Aase Refsnes, and I am Executive of Culture and Environment for Nordland County Council.

First, I would like to welcome you all – To Nordland County and to Bodø, the regional capital city. We are proud that this importance congress take place in our County.

We are now in the High North of Norway. In these areas, environmental protection is very important. We need to aim for increased international cooperation on resource utilization, environmental management and research. Therefore, I am very pleased for the main headline of this congress – \textit{Cool planning: changing climate and our urban future}.

In our highlands, we find the last large relatively unspoiled natural areas in our part of the world. However, the environment in the north is vulnerable and subject to heavy loads due to human activity. The effects of climate change and long-range pollutants are particularly noticeable in the High North.

The protection of the environment is one of the Council's main objectives. A clean, healthy environment, which promotes and facilitates sustainable development, is the legacy, which we all must leave to future generations.

The County Council is regional planning authority as recognized in the Norwegian planning and building act. As such, we have an important role in adaptation of regional plans. This is a democratic process that involve municipalities, national and regional institutions, and volunteer organizations. And of course, the inhabitants of Nordland. We work to ensure that local and regional planning, also take measures to meet the challenges of a changed climate.

In cooperation with the national and local level, Nordland County Council have adopted land use policies that relates to all activity in the county. The goal is a sustainable and knowledge-based management of the County’s resources on land and in the sea. The aim is to protect important natural and cultural heritage and the traditional land use of the Sami people.

The policies aim is also to facilitate industrial growth based on natural resources like minerals and fisheries. Amongst Norwegian counties, Nordland is one of the largest exporters of raw materials, industrial goods, energy and fish products. Sixty-five percent (65 \%) of export from
Northern Norway, comes from Nordland. And every tenth farmed salmon in the world comes from Nordland.

ISOCARP Institute is “a world-class knowledge bank and think tank for planning excellence, which empowers individuals, organizations and institutions to achieve better human settlements.” And, I would add, ISOCARP are fostering democratic processes all over the world.

The development of Urban Areas will have a major impact on the future sustainable development. This will also be the case of Norway and Nordland. Urban Areas are, however, also places where challenges such as segregation, unemployment, and poverty are concentrated. Thus without planning and smart politics urbanization can be negative.

In the years to come, Nordland will face more frequent and more intense episodes of heavy rain- and snowfalls. In relation to this, we can expect more storm surges and stormwater, and a heightened risk of snow and earth avalanches.

I hope this congress and the discussions amongst you can give input for the solution of sustainable urban planning also in the High North. We are proud to be collaborative partners and I hope you will have a nice stay in the city of Bodø.

Thank you!