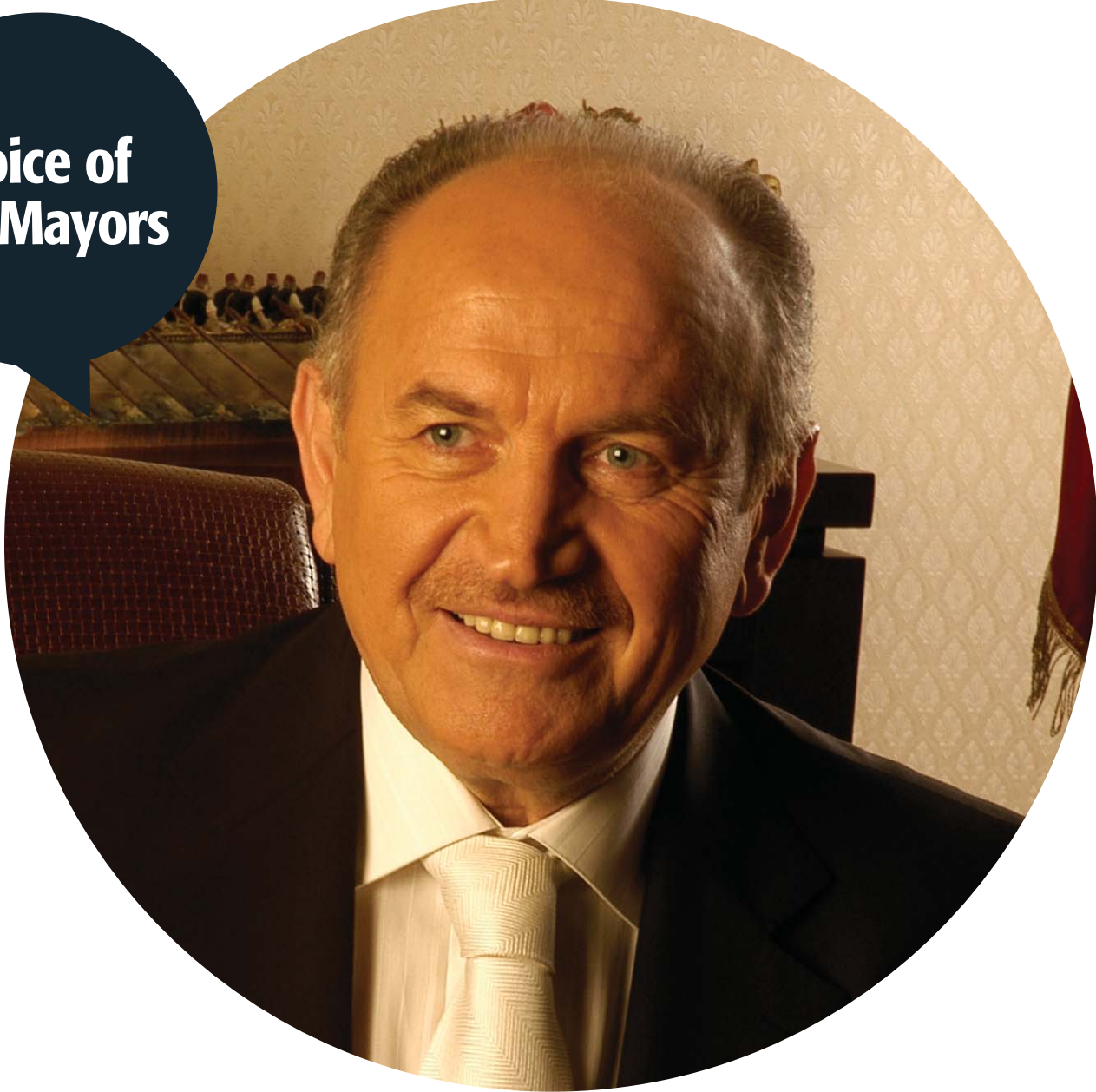metropolis ● 30 YEARS

Voice of the Mayors

Kadir Topbaş
Istanbul

Urban Transformation

About
Voice of the Mayors

Celebrating its thirtieth anniversary, METROPOLIS wishes to leverage the unique experience of its members, represented by the mayors of the major metropolises, presidents and governors of metropolitan regions. Too often, the expertise of these high-ranking officials is lost once their term has come to an end. However, at a time when global urban development is quickening its pace, their experience is more beneficial than ever for the new generations of local decision-makers, the entire spectrum of public and private local development stakeholders and partners in the international community.

In its capacity as a network of the world's major metropolises, METROPOLIS also seeks to make an active contribution to the current international debate concerning the revision of the Millennium Development Goals, negotiations on climate change and the preparations for the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (Habitat III).

This is how the idea for **Voice of the Mayors** came into being, as a wealth of first-hand testimonies from local and regional leaders whose experience deserves to be recounted and disseminated. Bequeathing this legacy also conveys the willingess of METROPOLIS members to share their experiences and to enhance the exchange of knowledge, a concerted effort to contribute towards shaping sustainable urban development worldwide.

Upon the creation of METROPOLIS in 1984, the 14 founding members expressed their desire to work together to strengthen their mutual capacities to manage their cities. **Voice of the Mayors** helps to achieve this goal with the 136 members that comprise METROPOLIS today and the young generations of local decision-makers.

The testimony you are about to read serves to enhance the association's training activities and the work carried out within the framework of the METROPOLIS Initiatives, the METROPOLIS Women International Network and of METROPOLIS Youth.

The experience of the leading decision-makers in major metropolises across the world is essential. They manage the day-to-day needs of millions of citizens as regards housing, mobility, education, health, safety and energy, to name but a few. They run cities, urban areas and metropolitan regions that are sometimes larger than certain United Nations member states in terms of population, budget size and global reach. They are the main political leaders on the front line, tackling the challenges facing the planet. Nevertheless, this role has yet to be sufficiently recognised in present-day international relations.

It is Metropolis' aspiration that **Voice of the Mayors** will help these leaders' words to be better heard, listened to and taken into consideration by the international community.

Alain LE SAUX
METROPOLIS Secretary-General
October, 2014

KADIR TOPBAŞ

Curriculum vitae

Dr. Topbaş was born in Yusufeli - Artvin in 1945. He graduated from Faculty of Theology of Marmara University in 1972 and Department of Architecture of Mimar Sinan University in 1974.

He served as the advisor to the Mayor of Istanbul, Mr. Recep Tayyip ERDOĞAN between 1994 and 1998. Possessing a political background of more than thirty years, Dr. TOPBAŞ was elected Mayor of Beyoğlu District in 1999. In 2004 and 2009 consecutively, he was elected as the Mayor of Istanbul from AK Party in the local elections. He is the very first re-elected Mayor of Istanbul. The local elections of 30th March 2014 further brought him a third victory by granting him 44,3% of the votes.

In 2004, Dr. Kadir TOPBAŞ was elected as the President of Marmara Union of Municipalities and has been serving as the President of Union of Municipalities of Turkey since May 2009.

He is also a leader in the international arena. He was first elected as the Co-President of UCLG in 2007 and as the President of UCLG later in 2010. Having served as President for 3 years, he was re-elected in October 2013 for the 2013-2016 term. He was also elected unanimously as the President of UNACLA in 2011 and still serves as the President. Presiding the Asian Mayors Forum (AMF) between 2011 and 2012, Dr. TOPBAŞ was elected as a member of the "High-Level Panel of Eminent Persons on the Post-2015 Development Agenda" on 31st July 2012.

Kadir **Topbaş**

3rd TERM IN THE MANAGEMENT OF SUCH A WORLD'S GIANT AS ISTANBUL…

As you know, thanks to its 15-million population and its power that makes up fifty percent of country's economy, Istanbul is not a city but rather a country. Furthermore, its economy is larger than those of 127 countries in the world. That's why people always ask me how I manage to govern such a metropolis as Istanbul. I succeed by going beyond the traditional approaches of local governance. My main governing principles are transparency, participation, efficiency and accountability. On the other hand, besides these basic techniques, other motivations are required to govern such a great metropolis as Istanbul. For example, to be able to govern this city, one needs to be in love with it. As I always say, "Istanbul is my life." We work day and night in order to create a city that will have an impact on the 21st century. When people ask me how I am, I reply: "I am like Istanbul". This means I am always active and ready to serve.

Identifying myself with the city is one of leading the motivations for my actions, because the Mayor of Istanbul is the person who is always at the disposal of this city. For this reason, the mayor has to be identified with the city. He has to be like the city itself. I am truly in love with the city. I know its past and present, I get excited for it and I get worried about it. My love for the city grows each passing day. I serve Istanbul with love and joy as a person who is truly in love with it.

Another motivational factor is Istanbul's astonishing city identity and my desire to conserve it. In fact, Istanbul has a very colorful and deeply-rooted identity. For example, Istanbul hosted three great empires and many civilizations in its 8500-year-long history. It has also been a political center that influenced the decisions taken worldwide for 2700 years. Istanbul is the first and only city that held the title "Capital of Culture" besides the cities of the European Union member states. Istanbul is not only a city where two continents meet but also where "two worlds meet". 2000-year-old cultural networks that bring together cultures and connect East and West get together in Istanbul. The 9000km Silk Road from the East and 85000km Roman Road from the West meets in Istanbul. The Million Stone, symbol for the center of supply, is located here. The prime meridian was regarded passing through the millennium stone in front of Basilica Cistern and the crescent on the dome of Hagia Sophia. Maps were drawn, clocks were set and directions were found as Eastern Rome or Western Rome according to that meridian. It's for that reason a historian sees the world as "East of Istanbul" and "West of Istanbul". 150 years ago, August Comte, renowned French philosopher and sociologist, said that Istanbul could be "the capital of the world" in the future as well. According to Comte, Istanbul was "a city that could bring together east and west peacefully". Syrian poet of our day, Adonis says: "There are capitals from past. There are capitals from past and as of today. Istanbul differs from all. Istanbul deserves the title of the capital of the future world". Istanbul is one of the rare cities that have been able to conserve its invaluable herit-

age for thousands of years. 1400-year-old Hagia Sophia, 1300-year-old Arab Mosque, 1600-year-old town square Beyazıt, 1700-year-old Obelisk of Theodosius and Column of Constantine all stand to this date. Originally 971 meters long, 1600-year-old Valens Aqueduct still lives with its 921m length. Epic 22km-long city land walls surround the historical city. This urban identity provides Istanbul an advantage in global competitiveness.

What makes a city perfect is its ability to join the intercity global competition by conserving its local identity. Only by adopting global developments, a city will go through standardization. Cities are places where civilizations are born and in this process they have developed a unique culture. We can't disregard features that make up the city's identity. Otherwise, cities will lose their identities. On the other hand, we can't close our eyes to what is going on around the world. We can't isolate ourselves from global affairs. Because we know that cities that were once the attraction center of the world lost their appeal and were forgotten due to lack of ability to get involved in global affairs.

There are many cities that, albeit having an important role in the history, have only succeeded to become the subject of archeological excavations today, and nothing more, simply because they were not able to improve themselves and adapt to the relations of others. In our day, when you look at the cities that stand out as magnificent cities, you will see that these cities are able to manage the balance between their local identities and the global developments very well. To be honest, I regard Istanbul as the best example of these magnificent cities, as Istanbul can both conserve its history of thousands years and adapt to the global developments, after carefully analyzing them.

FROM 'COMPLICATED' TO 'PLANNED' METROPOL

While protecting the identity of the city, we have changed the previous management mentality on urbanization since we are in an age of intercity competition. Today, cities claim a much more active role as a driving force developing the

countries. It is possible for the cities to stand out in the competition by means of a healthy development. You cannot be involved in this race without protecting your urban identity, increasing the urban standards or without the investments to lead your city towards future. You cannot bring out the original identity of your city if you fail to eliminate the unlicensed and illegal construction. You cannot join the global competition with a city whose original identity is lost behind unlicensed buildings. Investments aiming to save the day, or lacking to account for the urban integrity, will become a burden for the cities, let alone serving for them. They become a waste of resources and lay hands on the rights of the future generations. Such municipalism is against our purpose of existence as Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality. For that reason, we decided to manage the urbanization of Istanbul with a new perspective.

First of all, we manage all aspects of the city from environment to transportation, to the social standards of the citizens as a whole, as a must of contemporary municipalism. We are saving our city from unlicensed and illegal buildings, which are also not resilient to earthquakes, with our urban transformation projects. We are training our teams to enable a municipal perspective that addresses the city as a whole and that cares for the future of a planned city as well as maintaining the social aspect. We hire qualified personnel, who are experts in their fields, and we constantly increase their capacity with internal trainings.

We are doing our best to realize projects that will repair the social fabric. That's why, we are trying to integrate the areas containing historical buildings to be protected with modern life and urban development as well as gaining them new functions that are in line with the silhouette. In order to do all of these, we focus on the planning. Therefore, I place great emphasis on the planning training of not only the relevant technical personnel of housing and city planning, but also each and every unit of the municipality. Because we do not do business without plan; we cannot even publish our monthly Istanbul Bulletin. This is also the reason why I established Istanbul Metropolitan Planning Center, as the first thing when I took

over the office. As you know, we provide service with 500 academicians, architects, city planners and engineers in 14 R&D groups in this center. This unit, which has a high level of knowledge and experience, addresses the problems from a scientific perspective and generate the most suitable solutions. We created the 1/100.000 Environmental Master Plan, which is approved by our Municipal Assembly and serving as the Constitution for the city. Thanks to the background of our personnel, we managed to put up an integrating plan in terms of "ecological sustainability", "economic sustainability" and "cultural sustainability".

Istanbul is no longer a city that has disorderly developed for almost 60 years, destroying the environment and damaging its identity. As you all know, Istanbul is now a multi-central city that is actively engaged in culture, arts, sports, finance, trade and congresses. Istanbul has now returned back to its original identity.

FROM IMPERIOUS AUTHORITY TO LOCAL GOVERNMENTS THAT CAN CREATE A BOND OF COMMUNICATION WITH STAKEHOLDERS...

There is no doubt that it is not only the internal network of the municipality that counts. In a community with modern networks, a municipality should also have many layers of networks and partnerships. The targets that we have set for Istanbul also require such relationships. As a politician with 40 years of political experience and as a mayor who is now on duty for a fourth term since I was elected as the Mayor of Beyoğlu District Municipality, I have come to realize that municipalities with strong domestic and foreign partners and allies can accomplish many things in the long run. To this end, I attached great importance to public participation. We have managed to put everything on the right track by creating a large network of stakeholders including especially our fellow citizens. We also included civil society, private companies and universities. With our stakeholders, we have had pleasant results from our many projects, particularly the urban transformation projects. This way, we changed the mentality of imperious authority into a local government system that can create a bond of communication with the stakeholders. We have managed

to establish more effective strategies thanks to the cooperation with our stakeholders. We have managed to create transparency. We chose more efficient projects. Finding financing for our projects became easier. We have managed to realize projects without spending any money from our budget. For example, we are building the third airport in Istanbul without spending any money from our budget and it will be the biggest airport in the world.

We also provided more legitimacy and transparency in decision making processes. The urban transformation projects are the most vivid examples of this situation. As you all know, urban transformation projects pose significant political risks. Therefore one might either force such a project or just leave that part of the city as it is. We could overcome this problem with a participatory approach. We do not confiscate any property through legal channels as we think citizens' rights are the basis of all our efforts. We try to negotiate and agree with people while transforming their neighborhood. We try to promote and encourage their participation in urban transformation with the tools we have developed in this process. We develop urban transformation models based on housing transfer or an increase in the housing. We do not force any transformation plans. We do not tell them "to obey the plan or take it to the court". We try our best not to cause any tension between government and civil society. On the contrary, we try to conciliate our fellow citizens. We maintain our communication and continue to negotiate for years as in the example of Seyrantepe urban transformation project. We pay them damages for the debris. We establish an association before we start a project so that there can be a platform for the citizens to express their demands and expectations regarding the transformation project. We take these demands and expectations into consideration while conducting the project. We conducted our projects in Kartal, Cendere and Fikirtepe districts in this way and they were all very successful.

While developing our strategies, we created a sense of belonging and commitment. For example, there is a group of teenagers who used to vandalize our sports centers. They started to work out at this center and this way, they have been rehabilitated. The teenagers, who now do sports, left behind all their bad habits and became the voluntary caretakers of the sports center and the common use areas.

Additionally, thanks to the cooperation with our partners, we have created opportunities to support innovation and exchange between institutions. We have improved our institutional capacity.

THE RATE OF DEVELOPMENT OF A CITY IS PROPORTIONATE TO THE OPPORTUNITIES IT PROVIDES FOR THE DISADVANTAGED

Furthermore, we need to ensure that people from different walks of life like people with disabilities, elderly, young or poor people participate fully in daily life. In this regard, we create new lines of business so that women can participate in production, and organize training programs to support working women. We established the Women Coordination Center which caters for any needs of women. In many centers for people with disabilities, we have established a comprehensive network of service. In these centers, several services are provided including consultancy on the rights of people with disabilities, education, rehabilitation with physiotherapy and sport, hydrotherapy, library, transportation to/from households when necessary. Thanks to a new practice in our municipality, all projects are submitted to a committee for approval. This committee reviews the projects taking the people with disabilities into consideration. Projects are not initiated without approval. This kind of work produces gratitude among our people. Once a disabled person who had been transferred from home said to me, "Thanks to you, I caught a fish for the first time in my life." We look out for our elderly people via a more human centered project called "seniors apartments" besides Almshouses. Seniors apartments aim to cater for every need of elderly people from health to nutrition and care, and they cost much less. At the same time, we conduct works in order to encourage dynamism in young people. While supporting needy students with educational aids, we provide them the oppor-

tunity to improve themselves in internet houses which facilitate access to information. We are well aware of the role of sports in the lives of young people. For that reason, we build indoor sport facilities in school gardens around the city. These facilities help young people to complete their social development and avoid bad habits. Moreover, after school hours they are used by the residents of the neighborhood as a way of coming together and meeting points and help to develop the sense of belonging rather than alienation.

CATCHING UP WITH THE ERA IN GOVERNANCE

I always thought that I had to establish and develop an infrastructure based on information technology. It was necessary to render our services more efficiently and effectively. It is essential to base infrastructure and planning on information technology in order to monitor, supervise and further not only public works but also urban development socially and culturally.

Especially such metropolitan cities as Istanbul can only succeed in organizing urban life with their capacity for information and high technology. If we want to establish order, peace, welfare, knowledge, esthetics dominance instead of chaos, fight, poverty, ignorance, ugliness, we need to integrate information centers, universities, business world and trade bodies into city life in a way that will contribute to the city. Apart from the modern cities that have been recently established, we have such ancient cities with magnificent rich historical pasts as Istanbul, Rome, Cairo, Baghdad, London, Moscow, Bukhara and many others.

There are also cities which emerged after the Industrial Revolution. Manchester, Hamburg, Liverpool and Detroit are only a few of these cities. Just like human beings, cities have a process of development, growth and - if measures are not taken - collapse. For example, there are ancient cities which are uncovered by archeological ex-

cavations - cities that could not achieve historical continuity, renew themselves and develop their background by creating new values. These are dead cities. For this reason, neither ancient nor new cities can preserve their attraction without investing in information technologies in the "information age" that we are living in. If there is a vibrant daily life and a qualified and well educated population in a city; if the business world and markets are growing by producing value; if science centers, universities and research institutions produce new ideas for the future, it means that local government makes a significant investment on information technologies in that city. Business world, universities and local government have to manage a consistent cooperation for the future of the city and its residents. If these institutions act together, uncontrolled growth would be replaced by planned growth; poverty and misery would be replaced by welfare and development; and ignorance would be replaced by knowledge and culture. Cities would become the place of high culture, aesthetics, splendid architecture, vibrant and fast-paced economic activities. As Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, we took some very important steps in this regard. We plan this city with the participation of universities. We examine the environmental analyses such as air, water, vegetation etc., historical city, transformation areas, new settlement areas, new centers in 14 different workshops. One of the most exciting works we have conducted is "My Project Istanbul" that was launched to enable university students to address the urban issues as this great city hosts major and long-established universities. We provide monetary support for researches and graduate and doctoral dissertations by orienting their academic studies towards such subjects as transportation, environment, social services and infrastructure. As a conclusion, we obtain concrete and successful results in a wide range of areas including redefinition of nutrition problems of elderly people in the almshouse that cannot be spotted at a first glance; making of a passenger ship according to the sea, coast and weather conditions of Istanbul with a 30% fuel saving. These works evidently show that local government's close relationship and cooperation with centers that produce information and value make a more significant contribution to the city than expected. While we care about the quality of the existing labor force in our cities and promote any attempt to ensure this, similarly we attach importance to the background and development of our municipal organization and our staff. Firstly, we propose students, who graduated with a high grade from prestigious and prominent universities of Turkey, to work with us. So, hundreds of brilliant students who ranked as the first five in universities and graduated with this grade joined our staff. Secondly, we offered our staff the opportunity to follow their PhD. in the world's leading universities which rank as the first twenty universities. A PhD. program lasts 4 to 5 years. For this reason, these steps are not pragmatist and populist, they are rather rational and long term steps. I believe that we cannot fully discharge our responsibilities if we act by considering only our term and not investing in the future.

Istanbul
July, 2014
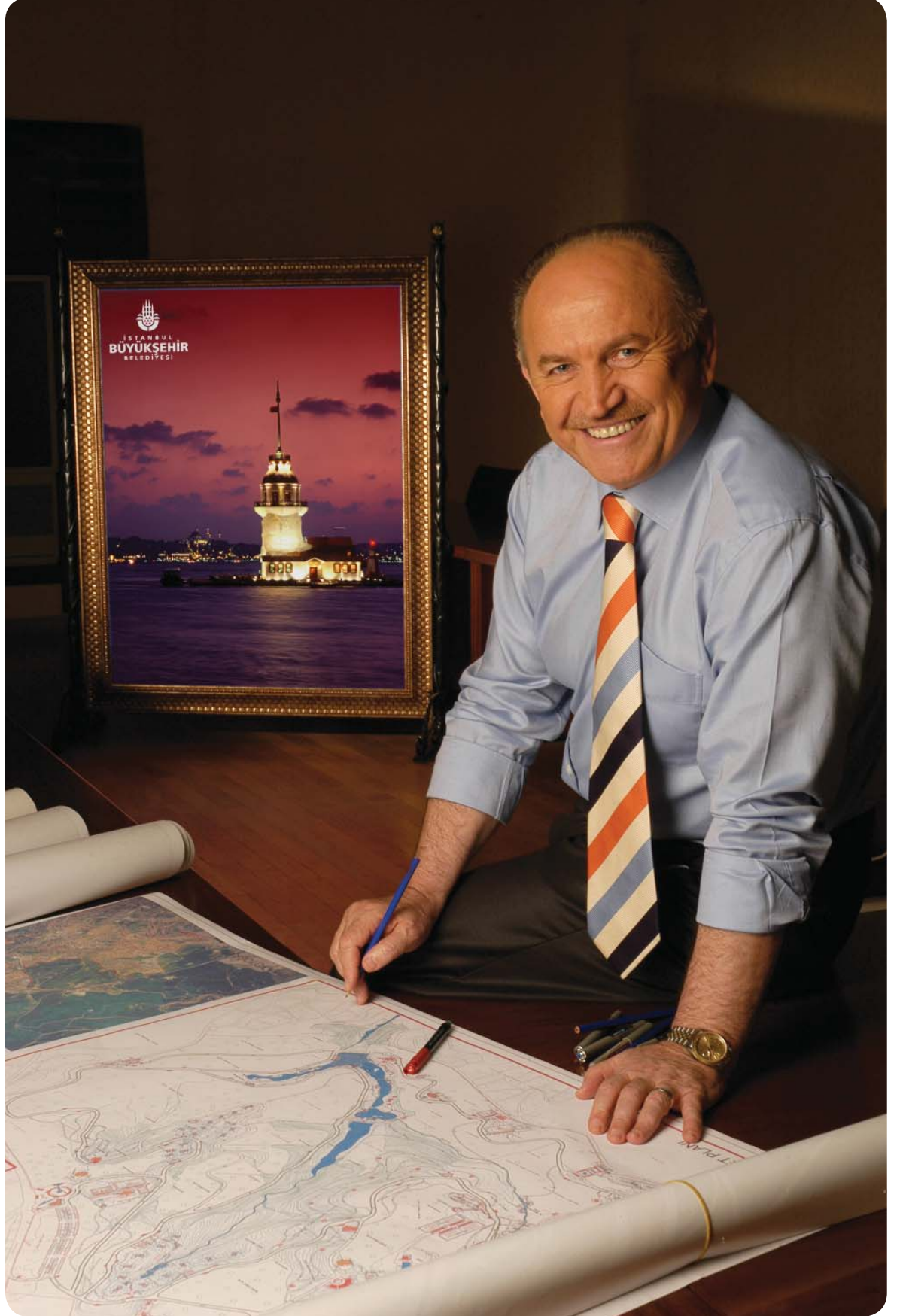
METROPOLIS' VOICE OF THE MAYORS IS SUPPORTED BY

Cities Alliance
Cities Without Slums

The Cities Alliance is a global partnership for urban poverty reduction and the promotion of the role of cities in sustainable development. Cities Alliance Members include local authorities, national governments, non-governmental organisations, multilateral organisations, and associate members. METROPOLIS is a founding member of Cities Alliance.

www.citiesalliance.org

FMDV
Supporting local authorities to access funding

The Global fund for cities development (FMDV) was created in October 2010 at the initiative of METROPOLIS, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) and 34 founding members (cities and city networks). It is an international political organisation which aims to strengthen solidarity and financial capacity by and among local authorities and is complementary to existing mobilisation, coordination and advocacy networks.

www.fmdv.net

UCLG
United Cities and Local Governments

Created in 2004, United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) is the united voice and world advocate of local and regional self-government. Members of UCLG are present in 140 countries, and are organized into seven regional sections, a Forum of Regions, and a metropolitan section coordinated by METROPOLIS. UCLG's membership includes over 1,000 cities and regions, as well as 155 local government associations.

www.uclg.org

WORLD URBAN CAMPAIGN

The World Urban Campaign is a global partnership coordinated by UN-Habitat, designed to promote a positive vision of sustainable urbanization and to place the urban agenda at the highest level in development policies. It is meant to build alliances with all the sectors of society in a movement to provide a knowledge and action-oriented platform to address urban challenges. it is a platform for Habitat III, the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development to be held in 2016.

www.worldurbancampaign.org

Voice of
the Mayors
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metropolis ●

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