

CEO Annika Falkengren's Opening Speech, Globe Forum 18 April 2007

Ladies and gentlemen - welcome to the Globe Forum...

...that previously used to be the Eastern European Business forum, but which now takes on a more ambitious task. The change of name of the conference highlights the fact that we now also include India and China as part of our analyses and discussions. Which is natural, given the size and importance of these two Asian giants.

We live in a world of continuous change. A world that is turning more and more global or – as some say – a world that is getting flatter and smaller. Consequently, it is natural that also this conference should change and expand.

It's a great honour for me to introduce these three days of what is bound to be fruitful and stimulating debates, seminars and interaction and most of all – three days of great opportunities for future business!

The strong trend towards globalisation has been an engine for the world economy for more than a decade. Following the fall of communism and the rapid growth in Asia and Eastern Europe most human beings are now actually part of one world economy. In its latest World Economic Outlook, the IMF just the other day estimated that the integration of China, India and the former Eastern bloc into the global market economy has led to a fourfold increase in the effective global labour force! And the number is estimated to more than double once again by 2050!

The mix of technology and economic integration transforming the world has created unparalleled prosperity. Never in the history of mankind have so many people in such a short time moved out of poverty into a global middle class. In the past five years the world has seen faster growth than at any time since the early 1970s. China and India – as well as our neighbours in the Baltic countries - have been among the fastest growing economies in the world!

And growth does not only depend on the massive rise of the labour force. Market reforms and stiffer competition have led to higher productivity. In China each person now produces four times as much as in the early 1990s. China is now the world's second largest R&D spender. So far in 2007, Indian and Russian firms have bought foreign companies for a combined 22 bn US dollars – just some examples of the increasing importance of these countries.

However, there are dark clouds as well. We have recently seen clear signs of overheating in countries like Latvia and Estonia. Several of the Central and Eastern European economies show imbalances. And on the global scene, there are – as you know - huge imbalances with savings surpluses in China and the oil exporting countries but a large US current account deficit. The Doha round is yet to be completed, and there is a latent threat of protectionism. And global warming is now considered to be a fact, with likely effects including melting of glaciers, higher sea levels, and more violent weather - over time affecting most business sectors.

The Globe Forum will focus on these issues. How fast and for how long can markets grow? To what industry landscape will global sourcing of goods and services take us? What is the common responsibility for companies and individuals for sustainable development? How will consumer behaviours and the structure of financial markets change?

The opportunities and the challenges ahead of us will be reviewed. As will the risks. All of us here will definitely learn more about the new world's potential, its rewards – and its dangers. We will be here for three days, meeting in this big convention hall and in smaller workshops and speed meetings.

So it's a massive program. And as the CEO of SEB I'm proud to stand here before you as the main sponsor of these activities.

SEB has always - all through our history of more than 150 years - followed our customers as they have become more international. And we will continue to do so. We help Nordic companies enter the world's leading growth markets.

Ten years ago we had one small rep office in Moscow. Today we have more than two million customers, more than 200 branch offices and 5 000 employees in Eastern Europe.

Ten years ago we had a small rep office in Beijing. Today we have a brand new branch in a gleaming office tower in Shanghai offering corporate customers banking services.

So I expect not only high quality analyses and debates from these days. I also expect new business opportunities.

In this respect, I don't think I will be disappointed. As I look at the agenda I see a long list of prominent speakers, experts, leaders and analysts. Just look at the first panel! It includes the President of Latvia, the President of Moldova, the Swedish Minister of Enterprise and Energy, and the Indian ambassador to Sweden.

Dear friends - I know you want me to stop now, so the conference may start in earnest and the first panel can come on stage.

So I will. Let me just end by saying you have three days of good listening – as well as of productive work-shops and great opportunities for networking – ahead of you. There will be plenty of time to discuss new business opportunities. We will meet friends and partners, joining together in a noble effort of lowering barriers and raising standards, hoping to knit together peoples in ever closer relations making the world even smaller!

Welcome to the Globe Forum! Thank you!

 [Back](#)

Skandinaviska Enskilda Banken AB (publ)