



XXIX UIA General Assembly
Copenhagen (Denmark): 6 - 9 July 2023

Item 4 on the agenda

REMARKS BY IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT THOMAS VONIER

Why does the UIA exist? What is the purpose? As president, I originated a way to express how I see its *raison d'être*, building upon its initials: **Unify** the profession, **Influence** public policies and **Advance** society through design.

The UIA does none of these things well, and yet now, more than ever, we need an international organization to accomplish these aims. If it is to be of value to society, architecture, and architects around the globe, the UIA must address and solve five issues at the core of its problems: integrity, representation, financing, competence, and relevance. I will develop these points in the General Assembly.

While improving the integrity and competence of its leadership, the UIA must also strengthen its Commissions and Work Programmes. These are the parts of the UIA that can foster productive international exchange and collaboration. These are the entities with the potential to influence, to promote best practices, and to encourage innovative approaches. These are the groups that can do useful work.

But nobody is listening to the UIA: not the public, not elected officials, not the press, and not even many architects. The UIA issues statements and fine-tunes guidelines. Its officers attend COPs and UN Habitat meetings. The outcomes? Little more than posts on social media and chat groups, with extremely limited engagement.

UIA representatives talk only among themselves, stewing over entitlements, jockeying for position, squabbling endlessly about internal minutiae, with no determination to accomplish any kind of mission.

The UIA must renew and expand the pool of people seeking office. It must end the prolonged presence of people who hold no positions of influence in their own national organizations, barely practice, and treat the UIA as a hobby, a platform for self-promotion, and a travel club. Make way for new people and inventive ideas.

Efforts to reform the UIA—to make it relevant and useful—have fizzled or fallen short. If its main purpose today is to hold a triennial Congress, as great as such events may be, it is time to rethink the organization.