



Welcome by Eva Åkesson, Vice-Chancellor, Uppsala University

Dear Magna Charta Council members, Signatories, Colleagues, Friends,

Welcome!

Today we have gathered here in Uppsala for the conference University Integrity – Society's Benefit. This is the very first Magna Charta conference outside Bologna. We are truly happy for the honour of hosting this conference and I am very proud to welcome you to Uppsala University.

In 1988, 388 universities came together in beautiful Bologna to celebrate Bologna University's 900th birthday. On this occasion the Vice-Chancellors present signed a document. One of the congratulants and signatories was Martin H:son Holmdal – Vice-Chancellor of Uppsala University. I'm not sure if the signatories grasped the magnitude of what they were doing. But when signing this particular document they made history.

You might think I'm exaggerating, but I'm not. This was a historic event. What Martin H:son Holmdal and all of the Vice Chancellors who signed the Magna Charta did is something worth celebrating – but more than that – something to be proud of.

By signing we as universities have all agreed on principles that unite us.

We signed the Magna Charta for the future. We owe it to generations past and generations to come to honour the principles of ethics expressed in the document. If we want to continue to be a relevant and positive force in the future we must remain true to what we believe in.

We believe in the fact that researchers themselves and the scientific community are the best judges of how to do research. We strongly believe that education is about questioning – that education becomes more relevant when students are able to test their ideas openly.

We also believe in long-term commitment. Some say that research results must be useful to society. We often hear that research should benefit the country where it is being conducted. New inventions, new drugs, new remedies. New findings that can be patented and used to develop products that our countries can prosper from.

Of course they have a point. But relevance is not always immediate. Measuring the value of research results is not an easy thing to do. Sometimes you can see benefits right away. But just as often, the usefulness may not become apparent until much later. By only looking at the obvious, short-term value of research we would be greatly underestimating its importance. We need the long-term perspective.

Development must be allowed to take its time even when we feel we are in a hurry. We are trying as hard as we can to make a change – to help society develop in a sustainable way. This in itself means that we must have a critical approach towards society and development. We need to keep a healthy distance and to ask the questions that nobody else asks.

This conference bears the title University Integrity – Society's Benefit.



Integrity is a beautiful word. By signing the Magna Charta we have manifested the fact that we are not for sale. We are the salt of the earth and we struggle to do all we can to make the world a better place. We are part of society. We contribute, but we don't let others shape us. We do not adapt and we do not follow. We are free.

This, my friends is what we – Uppsala University – promised to do when we signed the Magna Charta.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of you who have come to Uppsala to participate in this conference. I also want to thank all of you who have made this conference happen: Those of you from the Magna Charta observatory and every single one of you here in Uppsala who have worked hard to prepare this event. Thank you all.

Once again: A warm welcome to the twenty-sixth Magna Charta conference: University Integrity – Society's Benefit