

Überschrift/Titel:	Closing remarks on the first day of the European sustainability conference in Berlin 2007
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Redner/in:	Parliamentary State Secretary Astrid Klug
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Dear Colleagues,

It is a great pleasure for the German Government to host this conference, one which enjoys a long tradition of exchange between Member States on national and European sustainability strategies. With the adoption of the European Sustainable Development Strategy under the Austrian Presidency we entered a new phase: this new document stipulates that national strategies should be based on and implement the European strategy to a greater degree and, at the same time, Member States are called on to incorporate their experiences into the European discussions.

This conference addresses the basic question of how policy-making, administration and civil society can best be linked to make sustainable development a vital part of the political routine and a central theme of government action. This is by no means a simple question, as I know very well from my own experience – for instance as former chair of the Parliamentary Advisory Council on Sustainable Development of the German Bundestag.

Yesterday evening you were addressed by my successor in the Advisory Council, Günther Krings. I am not only Parliamentary State Secretary in the Ministry for Environment, but also, as before, still a Member of Parliament, and as such I place great importance on the role of parliaments in sustainable development. In the past, parliaments have rarely been involved in developing sustainability strategies – in most of the countries. We have to win the support of more members of parliament, not only for the idea of sustainable development, but also for its instruments and strategies. Parliaments have to decide on the laws for implementing sustainable development strategies, and members of parliament are important multipliers in society. Without their support, and unless they are more consistent in their function as the driving forces and regulators of government for the goals of sustainable development, sustainable development strategies will remain unsubstantial and weak.

For all these questions – linking, implementing, integrating – there is certainly no "one" answer to it, especially not for the various Member States of the European Union.

But I think one point is clear for all of us: only those who constantly analyse their own methods and are prepared to learn from others can make lasting improvements. Sustainable development is and will remain an ongoing process of seeking and learning which must adapt again and again to changing circumstances – this was definitely one of the aims of

those who established and further developed the principle of sustainable development, from the Brundlandt Commission and Rio process through to Johannesburg. Volker Hauff and Klaus Töpfer are among these founding fathers. With their contributions they reminded you today of the historical context and problems which led to the first steps of this political process, of the immense progress which has been made and of the new – and unfortunately in some cases also old – challenges currently facing the guiding principle of sustainable development.

Today's talks and discussions have surely highlighted how important it is, in view of the pressing problems – from climate change to developing an international policy on poverty reduction – to mobilise all political forces in order to achieve sustainable development. We must critically examine whether our policy-making approaches follow the right paths for practical success. The relationship between political decision-makers in parliaments and governments and the administrative bodies which have to implement their decisions is by no means unproblematic.

Administrations demand political leadership – and this is essential for a comprehensive sustainability policy. At the same time, political credos will not be enough if the administrations continue to simply muddle through their day-to-day activities or if too much time and power is wasted in negative competition. What we need is positive competition for better ideas, better projects and better results in sustainable development between ministries, institutions and political levels.

The German Government would like to contribute to the political leadership – and not just at a national level. We are well aware of the relevance which challenges with long-term and global impacts have for key sustainability issues such as climate change, future energy and resource supply or, for example, the loss of bio-diversity. For this reason, these topics are high on the agenda during our EU and G8 Presidencies. The new EU targets for climate protection and energy are important milestones. Likewise, we will not relax our efforts to achieve progress in the framework of the G8 – even if this should prove to be a much longer road. But the European targets and the current European leadership are a very important signal and the reason why other key players like the US are beginning to move – a little bit.

But let me return to the subject of this conference: how can the guiding principle of sustainable development be implemented more effectively?

The renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy provides a useful point of reference. It describes unsustainable trends and formulates some quantified targets . It also calls for a progress report every two years on implementation in the Member States. This mutual learning process is one of the particular strengths of the renewed EU Sustainable Development Strategy. What works well in the Member States can become a standard at EU level. The fact that individual Member States take on a pioneering role in different sectors can lend further momentum to a sustainability policy at European level. As today's results make clear,

it is now a question of using best practice experience, for example the positive impacts of a peer review or the management approach using indicators linked to quantified targets. We must select from the range of options those elements best suited to the situation of the individual countries, in order to make faster and more effective progress on the road to sustainable development.

The EU strategy offers a number of new instruments which link the national and EU levels and make the implementation of sustainable development more effective. This includes the regular progress report which gives the Member States an incentive to continually review their policies by reporting on their contribution to implementing the EU goals. The strategy also provides for peer reviews, co-financed by the Commission, which broaden the national view and provide ideas – however different the political cultures might be. The European Sustainable Development Network (ESDN) and the network of European Environment and Sustainable Development Advisory Councils (EEAC) are specifically named in the European Strategy as important forms of networking and of course also play a key role at this Conference.

However, major integration potential still exists not only in the linking up of EU and national levels, but also at government level. I hope that today's breakout workshops made it clear that successful integration between policy areas and between ministries is vital for improving government action in terms of sustainable development. And I would

add: we also need a communication offensive to convey the aims and successes of a sustainable development policy.

I would like to give an example from Germany: in the sustainable development process the aim of environmental policy-makers was always to anchor their goals in other policy areas too – for example in transport or economic policy. This had varying degrees of success.

The situation today is that, at a time when energy and resources are becoming scarcer and hence more expensive, people are considerably more aware that efficient use of energy and resources is not only ecologically desirable, it also makes economic sense. Thus there has long ceased to be a conflict between environmental protection and economic management. They are two sides of the same coin.

In the Federal Environment Ministry we are therefore committed to making economic policy more ecological and environment policy more economically sound. For our EU Presidency, we took the theme "Environment – Innovation – Employment". We are convinced that in light of the global challenges in energy and climate policy, the lead markets of the future are green markets: renewable energies, energy efficiency technologies, sustainable mobility technologies, water and waste technologies.

This weekend, at the Informal Meeting which we hosted in Essen, European Environment Ministers discussed the potential of these green lead markets and the opportunities offered by an ecological industrial policy. The focus was on technological innovations as solutions to environmental and climate problems, on sustainable growth and on jobs of the future. In short, it was a classic debate on sustainable development in all its dimensions and all its ecological, economic and social objectives. It was a successful debate, providing important impetus for European sustainable development policy, although it did not take place under this heading.

But it is, however, important that political successes for sustainable development are also named as such, so that people can connect the concept of sustainable development with plausible ideas and concrete projects. This will enable people to be motivated by success and activated at times when progress is not made, or made only slowly.

Guiding principles do not just need strategies and papers; they also need communication and identification. Only this combination will ensure that the goals, and the measures necessary to achieve these goals, are accepted and supported by the public. And the public pressure is also a key for a better implementation and integration of aims for sustainable development. And we need public support.

Before I close, I would like to remind us that the guiding principle of sustainable development was adopted as early as 1992 in Rio, 15 years ago. Sustainability was the right idea and it is the right idea. But now we really do not have any more time to lose. We have to act. The growing threat of long-term global challenges such as climate change and resource scarcity plainly shows us how crucial it is to IMPLEMENT the principle of sustainability, how vital it is to find a fair balance between the generations and between the nations of this world, so that all people can satisfy their needs without destroying the perspectives of others.

Let us continue – and vigorously – to address these challenges, at our various levels and to approach them from all angles.

So, thank you all for coming and for your commitment. I hope our conference is giving you new power for your work and you will return home with the feeling that at last something really is happening, and with the knowledge that your colleagues throughout Europe have the same problems, but also the same will to solve these problems together.

And where there is a will, there is a way, and we are finally on the right way to achieving more sustainable development.

In this sense I would like to wish you a successful second day at this conference and now a nice evening on the boat.