

**Plenary Session I:
Opening Session
Tuesday, 1 June, 9.00 – 10.00 h
Venue: Plenary Hall IKBB**

Internationale Konferenz
für Erneuerbare Energien, Bonn
International Conference
for Renewable Energies, Bonn



WELCOME ADDRESS

Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul

Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Germany

Excellencies, Members of Parliament, Delegates, Guests,

A very warm welcome to the International Conference for Renewable Energies. I am delighted that you have all made your way to Bonn. Thanks to your presence here, the city will, over the next few days, be witnessing the largest demonstration the world has seen so far of the "will to change", marking the dawn of the age of renewables. Together, we aim to make renewables the main source of energy of the future and to place the "energy partnership" between North and South on a new, sustainable foundation. Over the next four days, we will be charting the course that will lead us to that goal.

In the coming days, we will be constantly reminded that around one third of the world's population has no access to modern forms of energy. That is a quite striking figure. But our minds soon become dulled to such massive figures. What is important is not to forget the individuals that are behind that anonymous figures.

The international community has demonstrated its determination to fight poverty. At the UN Millennium Assembly, it resolved to halve the proportion of people living in extreme poverty by 2015. If that goal is to be achieved, a great many more people must gain access to energy.

Renewable energies are built on decentralised technologies and on resources, that are locally available. Renewable energies help in fighting poverty, in fighting climate change, in creating new jobs. They reduce dependency on oil. And: In the past there have been wars for the access to oil. There will never be a war on access to the sun.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The world has seen many major conferences in recent years. This intensification of the international dialogue has borne fruit: dozens of global Action Programmes have been launched. That is why at this conference the focus is on action and on learning from successful examples and experience.

The expected conference outcomes – the Political Declaration, the Policy Recommendations and, above all, the International Action Programme – go together to make up the strategic framework for a globally sustainable energy future. We invite everybody to lend their support to these agreements on the expansion of renewable energies as a major component in our sustainable energy future.

Most conference delegates are here to represent their governments, and I would like to extend a very warm welcome to them. We are also extremely grateful for the close co-operation with the United Nations, the World Bank and the many other international organisations that are also represented here at the conference. Of no less importance are the businesses, civil society groups and other stakeholders attending the conference. To them, too, I would like to extend a very warm welcome. The first section of our conference work, beginning immediately after this opening session, is devoted to a dialogue with all stakeholders.

All of the participants I have just mentioned were also involved in the preparations for the conference. The International Steering Committee has been preparing the topics and outcomes for over a year. I would like to thank all the members of the committee for their work.

The German government is hosting the conference and we have made every effort to create the best possible environment for your discussions. Now, however, it is up to all the delegates to make the conference a success. And that success will be measured by the practical and effective measures that emerge from this conference.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Let me now introduce to you Mohamed El-Ashry. I am happy that he is willing to take over the role of facilitator of the conference, thereby supporting Jürgen Trittin and myself in chairing the conference. Having for many years been the Director and Chairman of the

Global Environment Facility, he enjoys highest international reputation. I am convinced that his experience and renown will be very helpful in making the conference a success.

When we started preparing for the conference, we set ourselves two aims. We wanted to make the conference as participatory as possible and as transparent as possible. I hope that, on Friday, we will all be able to confirm that these goals have been achieved.

We have posted updates on all stages of the preparations on the Internet. A great many people were involved in preparing the issues to be dealt with and the conference outcomes. Contributions from across the world were analysed and incorporated into the conference documents.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Allow me to close by saying a few words about our conference location. We find ourselves today in what used to be the plenary chamber of the Bundestag, the lower house of the German parliament. It is a relatively new building but it has already secured its place in history. It was here that the key decisions on German unity were taken, which ultimately led to the parliament moving to the German capital, Berlin. That is why Bonn has inherited this beautiful, transparent building, which is also used by the UN bodies headquartered here. The transparency of the building is symbolic of the transparency required of decision-making in a democracy, and that principle applies in equal measure to our conference.

As we go about our work, we are just a few metres away from that great European river, the Rhine. In the past, the Rhine has been the scene of many violent conflicts, most of them between Germany and France. These conflicts inflicted a great deal of suffering on the people of Europe. Yet, today, the Rhine is a symbol of European co-operation. The countries through which it flows have recognised that there is great deal more to be gained from working together than from disputes about territorial rights. Let us draw inspiration from the Rhine and its force and momentum. Here's some advice: if you get bogged down in your discussions and are labouring over a thorny point, take a break and stroll down to the Rhine. I can guarantee you will return with renewed energy.

I look forward to what I am sure will be a very successful conference.