

**Keynote speech on International Environmental Governance
by German Federal Minister for the Environment
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, we have reached what is undoubtedly a historic crossroads. In fifty years time history books may show that we failed to lay the foundations for a new age.

Or, they may show that we succeeded thanks to our far-sighted thinking:

- because our policies did not lose sight of the needs of our children and grandchildren,
- and because we were able to re-evaluate our concept of progress.

We have no choice: Today - with a global population of 7 billion people - carrying on with 'business as usual', in other words development primarily based on resource consumption, would deprive us of the bases of life for the future.

We have to break away from the age of oil, the age of unchecked resource consumption, from the age of growth at the cost of nature and the environment, and from the age of ever escalating demand for more and more and more again.

We need to advance to an age in which growth is decoupled from resource consumption, an age in which people take their economic practices to a new level and learn to act in harmony *with* nature, not *against* it. And in doing so we need to improve, rather than worsen, their quality of life.

We need to advance to an age that has learned to think on a planetary scale.

Today we have an unprecedented and inescapable responsibility to take decisions that essentially have irreversible consequences for the future.

We have to act now if we want to retain a humane world order.

We have to take decisions *today* in anticipation of developments that in some cases will only occur decades later.

Politically speaking this means we have to lay the structural foundations *now* for the future.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Despite all the problems I am convinced that we can lay the right foundations today.

In recent years there has been a shift in thinking. In industry, policymaking and society the enormous environmental problems facing all regions of the Earth are increasingly being seen as a positive challenge.

Overcoming this challenge requires a great deal of effort, political will and persistence, but it also opens up a host of opportunities - opportunities for development that is both environmentally sound and economically successful, and that creates new, secure jobs. This applies equally to developed, emerging, transformation and developing countries.

We, the developed countries in particular, must shape our progress in a way that not only ensures an adequate supply of energy and resources for future generations, but also retains the scope these generations need for social and economic structuring.

I strongly believe that this also reflects the need for fundamental reform of the UN's institutional structures.

We all agree on the huge significance of environmental issues.

It is therefore essential that the same significance is attributed to the international organisation for environmental protection. The United Nations Environment Organisation must therefore have the same status as the WHO, FAO and ILO.

II.

I would like to thank the Brazilian government for proposing the issues of

- green economy in the context of sustainable development and poverty eradication and
- the institutional aspects

as the main focus of the UN Conference on Sustainable Development in Rio in 2012. And I am very pleased that the UN General Assembly has agreed this accordingly.

The transformation to a green and low-carbon economy is a task for us all.

Initially it is of course the developed countries that are called on to act, and we accept this responsibility.

We Europeans must continue to be pioneers in global climate protection. The EU must raise its climate protection target from a 20% to a 30% reduction in CO₂ emissions by 2020 compared with 1990. I will do everything I can to make this happen.

It is also an important signal that the European Council has made a long-term commitment to reduce CO₂ emissions by 80 to 95% by 2050. We will only retain our credibility internationally if we implement this.

And only then will we be living up to our responsibility to emerging and developing countries, especially here in Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Rio plus 20 in May 2012 must be a milestone on the road to a green and low-carbon economy.

Cancun was a first success.

The global community proved its ability to act on international climate protection - with key agreements on future cooperation in the framework of the United Nations, by recognising the 2°C target and by agreeing on the review of corresponding measures.

And with the Global Climate Partnership Fund to provide financial support, especially in developing countries. The fact that 1.26 billion euros is now available up to 2012 as fast-start financing is a major success.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Cancun was important. But we cannot afford to relax. In order to make the Rio conference in May 2012 a true milestone we all have to considerably step up our efforts.

To this end the EU is calling for the adoption of a UN Green Economy Roadmap in Rio. The aim is for the United Nations to make a commitment, together with other stakeholders such as the World Bank and bilateral donors, to give all countries tailor-made support to help them on their path to a green economy.

The UN Green Economy Roadmap should therefore envisage country-specific guidance by the UN system on national policies for transformation to a green economy for all interested countries up to 2020.

Essential steps of implementation should be achieved by 2030.

The work on the Low Carbon Development Strategies and Plans and on the NAMAs will be an essential component of this effort.

III.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The United Nations is not yet adequately equipped for this global advisory task. It is obvious that today's multilateral architecture for the environment is not able to drive substantial change.

Worldwide, the implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements and of the goals and recommendations of the Agenda 21, the Johannesburg Plan of Action and the green economy concept, is far from satisfactory.

We have assessed the structural weaknesses of the multilateral architecture for the environment many times. There is no other international policy area with such a multiplicity of multilateral actors, which have such different mandates, resources and action areas. This fragmentation comes with the absence of a strategic framework for global environmental policy and sustainable development.

The rather cumbersome structures and processes geared towards environmental protection and sustainable development today will not achieve the transition to a green economy that is urgently required in order to address all areas of environmental degradation that we are faced with today.

We have often come to the conclusion that there has to be substantial improvement.

That is why we are meeting here today. And that is why we have to make progress in our common effort to reform the multilateral environmental architecture.

This is only possible with stable international rules - in order to effectively cut greenhouse gas emissions, to support the spread of modern environmental technologies and to counter the destruction of our natural bases of life.

The United Nations is the forum in which such rules must be agreed.

Only the UN framework can ensure they are formulated in a binding way.

This is the only way to guarantee these rules have an impact.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We will only be able to achieve real progress in Rio in 2012 if we are willing to conduct frank discussions.

UNEP is doing a great job of conceptualising and raising awareness. But unfortunately, UNEP is too weak and not well enough funded to move the implementation process forward.

As someone recently stated: Working with the institutions set up in the early 1970s is as if we still used computer software from the last century, when what we urgently need is IEG 2.0.

The establishment of UNEP was decided in 1972, almost forty years ago. But the world has changed a lot since then. The environmental problems have increased dramatically, in almost all areas.

The status quo is not an option. I very much applaud the efforts of the Kenyan and Finnish environment ministers for their work in chairing the consultative group on international environmental governance. The Nairobi-Helsinki outcome document clearly sets out the needs and options we are facing in the preparation of Rio plus 20.

Different reform proposals are under discussion.

Along with the EU, Germany strongly advocates a UN specialised agency, with a revised and strengthened mandate, supported by stable, adequate and predictable financial contributions.

And I underline this aspect: It must be based here in Nairobi! It would be the first UN specialised agency on the African continent.

It must be an environmental agency that has the leading role concerning all matters related to the environment, just like the World Health Organization concerning all matters related to health.

It should closely cooperate with other actors such as the World Bank, UNDP, ILO and UNIDO. It should be capable, through its regional offices, of offering tailor-made advice for all interested countries.

While respecting the legal autonomy of the multilateral environmental agreements, such an agency should continue to fulfil UNEP's existing mandate to provide policy guidance, and should cooperate with the COPs of the Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

It should provide support for the Multilateral Environmental Agreement secretariats in technical, logistical and programmatic areas in a synergetic way.

Such a well-resourced and fully equipped agency should be able to provide the professional services that countries need to efficiently implement Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

In addition, the agency should enhance coherence and political oversight of global environmental finance and play a role in the necessary efforts to dovetail financial streams for the environment, including the GEF.

This will be part of a better realignment of multilateral policy-making and the international funding mechanisms.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe that a better funded UN agency concentrating on environmental issues and on the implementation of the agreed goals and targets of sustainable development would be an excellent partner for developing countries in achieving sustainable growth. The agency should provide credible, coherent and effective leadership for environmental sustainability under the overall framework of sustainable development, and promote the coherent implementation of the environmental dimensions of sustainable development within the United Nations system.

There is an urgent need for capacity-development and assistance for efficient policy implementation, as well as other relevant policy advice for all interested countries.

IV.

Whatever reform options we discuss, our common goal should be a much more efficient multilateral architecture of global environmental policy, with a UN environment institution carrying political weight and providing the necessary leadership. This will enable improvements regarding developing countries' ability to cope with the multiple environmental challenges.

The reform should also include a state-of-the-art consultative mechanism for an active participation of civil society, including NGOs and the private sector.

To conclude, let me stress that we should strive for nothing less than a reform which combines an ambitious mandate with effective political weight and leadership.

Let us show the political will needed to make headway on this important reform agenda.