

Eröffnungsrede
des Staatsministers
im Auswärtigen Amt

Dr. Werner Hoyer MdB

beim **Global Media Forum**

„Climate Change and the Media“
(englisch)

– Es gilt das gesprochene Wort –

Bonn, 21.06.2010

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are gathered in a historical place today for the third Global Media Forum hosted by Deutsche Welle titled “The Heat is on – Climate Change and the Media”. The plenary chamber of the former German Bundestag is located on the grounds where Germany found its way back to its democratic roots after 1945. For decades, this is where decisions that guided and shaped Germany were made.

This is where Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl presented his ten point plan in 1989, thereby laying the foundation for German unification. Just a year later, on the very day of unification, Federal President Richard von Weizsäcker made the following statement that many of us will always remember: “We hope to serve world peace in a united Europe.”

This statement is more relevant today than ever before. For the world has not become a more peaceful place. New challenges threaten our security. These challenges are usually global in nature and we can only address them together, globally. This is especially true when it comes to climate change, a phenomenon that affects all of us. Around the world. Though the effects vary greatly.

In order to effectively counter climate change, we have to look beyond the borders of our country and take an interdisciplinary approach. That is why I am particularly glad that Deutsche Welle, in cooperation with the Federal Foreign Office, has brought together media representatives from around the world, experts from international organizations and government agencies, as well as politicians, artists, entrepreneurs and academics for this year’s Global Media Forum.

Deutsche Welle has recognized that a topic like climate change requires networked thinking on a global level. As the seat of the UNFCCC secretariat, Bonn is the ideal place for doing this. We want to promote and further develop Bonn as a UN location. This is an expression of our international engagement. We have to work together to fight climate change and create a spirit of solidarity, as we have in other fields.

Though the outcome of the Copenhagen climate summit was unsatisfactory, closer international cooperation is the only viable course. If we continue to work together – I’m already looking ahead to the next climate summit at the end of the year in Cancún – we can succeed in finding common solutions. On climate issues, there is no alternative to the UN process.

Over the next few days you will focus on climate change and the media. If you think about it, climate change has everything a story needs to make headlines around the world – everyone has heard of it and has an opinion on it. It is discussed extensively and emotionally, it directly influences many people’s lives and can further escalate existing conflicts or even cause new ones. If it were a celebrity, climate change would have no problem keeping fans on their toes. Yet despite the relevance and urgency of climate change, it is a topic that inspires the same feeling among all media consumers and journalists: we hear about this all the time, we’ve done countless stories on this. Does this topic offer us anything that is new or newsworthy?

In a media world where competition for high circulation and the best ratings is becoming increasingly tough, climate change will encounter ever greater difficulties finding its way into newspapers, news magazines and talk shows. On the one hand it is a topic of only latent relevance, but on the other hand its problems are becoming ever more pressing.

Extreme weather, crop failure and famine – changes in the climate already portend disastrous consequences for millions of people around the world. North and south will be equally affected, yet particularly the world’s island states. For some countries this threat is already tangible. Their very existence is in acute danger, and with it an important human right: the right to live in a healthy environment.

These countries are rightly counting on assistance from the international community. To simply accept or ignore this situation is not an option for us! Globalization also means a global, universal neighbourhood. Events in other regions of the world affect us more directly today than ever before. There are no longer any remote areas or incidents. The fight against climate change is therefore one of the central issues of the 21st century.

Climate change has a far-reaching impact on the economic and social development of every continent and its nations. It can cause instability in states and regions and be harmful to the peaceful coexistence of different populations. That is why climate protection is not just a topic for specialists. Climate issues, or to put it more precisely, international climate issues are an important part of our foreign policy which is aimed at achieving and maintaining peace and security.

German climate policy has brought new ideas to the international arena. The Petersberg Climate Dialogue, which was held at the beginning of May, is one example. Together with Mexico, Germany invited around 50 environment ministers from all around the world to the Petersberg near Bonn. This intentionally informal conference achieved its goal: it strengthened the trust between negotiating partners that had been weakened in light of the disappointing results of the Copenhagen summit. This trust is essential to achieving substantial progress in the negotiations on a UN climate agreement.

The Petersberg Climate Dialogue also inspired new international initiatives. For example in rainforest protection, where Germany is making considerable financial resources available, or on international standards for reviewing and assessing climate protection measures. Here Germany, along with South Africa and South Korea, is willing to serve as a coordinator. Through its multi-faceted engagement, Germany shows that it is assuming responsibility for climate change.

In Central Asia, the Federal Foreign Office is making 22.5 million euro available to improve the water supply. Water is scarce and unevenly distributed in this region. The largely dried-up Aral Sea, once the fourth-largest lake in the world, is a dramatic symbol of this water shortage. Within the framework of the so-called Berlin Process, the Federal Foreign Office is now supporting the establishment of sustainable structures for cross-border water management. Networking is taking place among water experts from Germany, the EU and Central Asia and education opportunities in the field of water management are being created.

Since 2009 the German Government has provided concrete support for countries threatened by climate change through the International Climate Initiative, to which we devote 120 million euro annually. While other countries are still considering whether or not to provide financial assistance, we are already implementing it – with an innovative aid instrument that has received much international praise.

Because what's special about the International Climate Initiative is the way it is financed. The funds come directly from the returns on auctioning allowances within the EU's emissions trading system. In Germany, we put a price on greenhouse gas emissions that the polluter has to pay. And we use this financial compensation for climate protection.

Our country is known around the world for its environmentally-friendly technology and ideas and we are working to establish sustainable economic structures that reflect ecological as well as economic goals. Here Germany is an international leader. We are promoting renewable energy in Germany – this is guaranteed by law – and have made environmental protection a national goal that is firmly rooted in our constitution, the Basic Law.

The German Government has voluntarily committed to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by 40 percent compared to 1990 levels by 2020. This is a goal that sends an international message, a goal that puts us at the forefront internationally, as well as within the EU.

German companies are also making a sustainable contribution to reviving the global economy that was weakened by the financial and economic crisis by investing in innovative technologies.

A stable climate along with sustainable, reliable and affordable energy are essential to the world's economies. A joint initiative aimed at investing in new, cleaner energy sources could create jobs, conserve the environment and protect the climate, improve living standards and increase global security.

All around the world initiatives and alliances aimed at curbing climate change have emerged. At the bilateral level as well, we are seeing increasingly intensive cooperation.

One example is the Transatlantic Climate Bridge, which since September 2008 has represented strengthened cooperation between Germany and the United States. Different projects bring together Germans and Americans who are working for climate protection. From journalists and farmers to businesses and universities, all participants are given a valuable opportunity to share their experience.

Making these developments visible to the broader public requires free and independent media. Reporting on climate change is a major challenge for journalists. On the one hand, the material is often highly scientific, complicated and controversial. On the other hand, it is often impossible to see the results of climate protection projects in the short term. Journalists have to ask themselves: which aspects of this topic are new and interesting? How can they be presented without resorting to

clichés? And how can often abstract developments be explained in an accessible way?

Here the media have a major responsibility. They can directly influence people's behaviour. For that reason, it is important that it is not just the spectacular natural disasters that make the news. Instead reporting needs to go deeper to shed light on the background and explain approaches to solving these problems. In this way, the media can help create transparency and make the political and scientific processes more accessible.

This requires media representatives around the world to have extensive background knowledge, creativity and commitment. That is why, above all, training for journalists is becoming more and more important. Even though many of them would like to bring this topic more into the spotlight, they often don't know how. This is where Deutsche Welle's training for international journalists, which receives financial support from the Federal Foreign Office, comes in.

Deutsche Welle's "Akademie" equips media representatives in many developing countries and emerging economies with the journalistic and technical skills to professionally portray political, cultural or economic topics. Bringing journalists from all over Central Asia together for a seminar on how to improve their online and radio programmes, for instance, or teaching radio editors from Guinea-Bissau how to produce accessible, understandable educational programmes is a step towards strengthening media around the world, thus making them more independent. Because media representatives who feel confident in their trade are better able to resist external intervention and influences. Moreover, audiences take them seriously and listen to them.

It is also necessary to mention the enormous potential social networks hold in this context. Social networks are an effective way to link people around the world – a decisive factor when dealing with a global topic like climate change. For young people in particular, the internet is increasingly becoming the main means of communication – in Germany alone, young people spend an average of over 100 minutes a day online.

As part of the social web, media have the opportunity to use existing structures to initiate discussions, gather ideas from their target audiences and effectively position

their topics. Due to the constantly growing number of interactive opportunities, this field is becoming more and more interesting for the media.

And the media are already utilizing this potential. Evidence of this can also be seen on the Global Media Forum website. Conference participants can network with one another online, discuss the topic and stay in touch. Users can submit photos for an interactive world map that demonstrates climate change where they live.

I would like to invite all of you to actively participate in the virtual discussion – may today's conference be the start!

This year's Global Media Forum would like to draw attention to the urgency of climate problems and develop approaches to solving them. Only when experts from different fields come together, as they have here, can we develop and implement responses.

That is why the Federal Foreign Office is once again happy to support this conference, as it has in past years. I hope you will meet many interesting new people and have intensive discussions over the next three days. I am sure that together we will find ways to solidly establish climate change as a topic in the media.

Climate change has the potential to make headlines – even without the disasters!