

Welcome message

New Climate Economy Conference on 25 February 2015

Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

I am delighted to have the opportunity to open this conference together with our partners from the French and British embassies and the Hungarian Economic Association.

2015 is a crucial year for global climate protection. We hope to agree on a new, binding climate protection agreement at the UN climate summit due to take place in Paris in December. With the Sustainable Development Goals, set to be agreed on this year, we will also be taking measures to combat and curb climate change which will play an important role within the framework of the UN. One thing has become clear since the UN addressed the topic of greenhouse gases and global warming for the first time over 30 years ago: our task is not simply to deal with the problems posed by climate change here and now, but to ensure that the sources of life on our planet are preserved for the generations to come.

In order to achieve this we must restructure our economic and social systems. The New Climate Economy Report clearly shows that this transformation presents not only a huge challenge but also an opportunity. It serves as an excellent basis for a discussion which political, economic, business and societal decision-makers need to have, namely on how to reconcile ongoing economic growth with sustainable protection of the climate and our resources. If short-sighted cost-benefit considerations prevent this from happening then it will not be possible to maintain growth and prosperity in the long term.

Against this backdrop, the German Government wants to make climate protection become a driver of progress to boost prosperity and competitiveness.

Germany's goals are ambitious:

First of all, the aim is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% compared to 1990 levels by 2020, and by as much as 80-95% in the long term – by 2050.

Since the beginning of the 1990s we have seen the decoupling of economic growth and greenhouse gas emissions: a 25% reduction of greenhouse gas emissions has gone hand-in-hand with a 37% rise in gross domestic product, going to show that economic and ecological interests do not conflict with one another.

In parallel to this, the transformation of Germany's energy system, the Energiewende, aims to make the German economy one of the most energy-efficient and environmentally-friendly in the world. The aim is that renewable energy, which currently makes up 27% of all energy, be expanded to provide 40-45% by 2025 and 80% by 2050. Energy efficiency is to be increased so that by 2050 we only use half as much energy as we did in 2008.

The Energiewende is a radical process of transformation. Its success depends on various factors, but allow me to mention just two:

1. Firstly, on using state-of-the-art technology. The German Government has thus made available 3.5 billion euros for an energy research programme. The impetus provided by this programme can already be seen, for example in the registration of patents: since 2006 the number of patents registered in the field of renewable energy has tripled.
2. It also depends on people using energy sparingly and efficiently. As we use energy for all aspects of life, the programme aimed at promoting greater energy efficiency is

directed at the business sector just as much as private households. Energy efficiency is everyone's business.

Today, renewable energy has for the first time become the biggest source of power generation in Germany. Our energy is not only increasingly green but consumers are also using energy more sparingly.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Germany is not just interested in advancing environmental and climate protection in our own country, we want to see progress at the international level, too. We have thus greatly contributed to making the topic of environmental and climate protection one of the EU's key policy fields. Indeed, in October 2014, within the 2030 Framework for energy and climate, the EU set itself an ambitious goal of reducing emissions by 40% by 2030. The EU's impact assessment on the 2030 Framework for energy and climate concludes that economic growth will in the long term be higher with such ambitious goals than without.

In the run-up to the COP21 climate summit in France, Germany will work to raise yet more awareness of the challenges and opportunities linked to climate protection within the framework of its G7 Presidency and through numerous events. For instance, next month Foreign Minister Steinmeier is hosting a high-level conference in Berlin entitled: Berlin Energy Transition Dialogue – towards a global Energiewende.

Allow me to conclude by asking three questions on the topic of climate protection and the new climate economy:

When?

Who?

And how?

The answers go:

Today.

Us.

And together.

On that note I wish you very stimulating discussions and many new, promising ideas.