

Überschrift/Titel:	Time to adapt. Climate Change and the European Water Dimension
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Redner/in:	Parliamentary State Secretary Astrid Klug
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Ladies and Gentlemen,

The symposium "Climate Change and the European Water Dimension" has come to an end. I know you've all worked hard since Monday and your efforts have been worthwhile. The symposium is a real success.

The conclusions and recommendations which have just been presented contain valuable input to the further development of adaptation strategies both at national and EU level. I congratulate you on this remarkable achievement.

At the end of such a symposium, it is always useful to ask two questions:

- **What have we learned that we can take home?**
- **What impact will the symposium have?**

Let me try to give some answers to both questions.

**What have we learned?** We have learned that the need for action is more urgent than ever before. The climate is changing and this will impact on the processes of the water cycle across the whole world with potentially disastrous effects, especially in developing countries, but also in European regions. It is time to adapt. Good professional water adaptation management is important and we need to work hard to improve it. But all our adaptation efforts will be wasted if we cannot keep global warming below the threshold of about 2 degrees Celsius and if we cannot limit the impacts to a manageable level. Therefore, we must keep the focus on reducing the emission of greenhouse gases.

Water is crucial for peace and sustainable development. There are too many disputes about water today, in almost all regions under water stress. I am not only thinking of disputes between countries and states, but also between communities, upstream and downstream, or even disputes within communities. And the impact of climate change on water has serious consequences for the environment and the human behaviour: When rivers and groundwater fall dry, when fields turn into desert, life for humans becomes difficult – if not impossible – and they have to move elsewhere.

All this we know, and yet, there is not enough dynamic progress toward the adaptation of the water sector to climate change for all uses and all users in the future. This symposium aimed to strengthen the political profile of this issue by providing a platform for representatives from governments, science and research, stakeholder groups and non-

governmental organisations to discuss the likely impacts of climate change on water management and water dependent sectors, as well as options for adaptation.

**Let me highlight some of the key messages which you have given priority:**

- Sustainable water resources management provides the basis for successful adaptation, which needs a common and integrated approach, in particular in sectors which are strongly dependent on the availability of clean and sufficient water, such as agriculture, electricity production, inland navigation and tourism. Only a common and integrated approach will provide successful win-win solutions, and avoid negative cross-sectoral feedbacks of measures or non-action in one sector.
- Regarding water management the Water Framework Directive (WFD) provides a valuable framework for introducing climate change impacts into water resources management and water basin planning. Planning tools which are under development for implementing the WFD will become very helpful for the planning of measures for adaptation.
- High potential for mitigation and adaptation to climate change is given by agriculture, which has to be optimised especially in water-scarce regions. There is certainly scope for improving the adaptive capacity of this sector through e. g. funding schemes provided by the common agricultural policy of the European Union.

- Currently Europe has started a broad discussion on the future of its energy sector. Decentralised approaches and a diverse energy mix are likely to be beneficial both in terms of adaptation and mitigation.
- Regarding inland waterway transport a more detailed assessment of the vulnerability to climate change is needed. To maintain flexibility, reversible measures should be given priority.
- In order to promote the implementation of sustainable development measures in the tourism sector, improved water efficiency should become one of the main priorities. A diversification of tourism activities could further help to make the sector more resilient to changes in climatic conditions and water resources availability.

Now we have a better understanding of what it takes to develop the right strategies. We have learned more about the nature of adaptation in the water sector and the magnitude of the challenges ahead of us.

However, further research activities are necessary to tackle adaptation properly. In this regard priority should be given to issues like better understanding how the water cycle and the aquatic ecosystems reacts to climate change at local and regional water basin scale, quantification of economies and social impacts of climate change in different water related sectors as well methodologies to develop and evaluate adaptation strategies.

Responses to the impacts of climate variability and climate change need to involve actions at many different levels. International treaties, conven-

tions and global accords are the foundation for concerted action to mitigate global warming. Regional agreements provide a basis for better management of international waters to prepare for and alleviate extreme events. Information sharing, regional climate and weather forecasting and modelling, monitoring and early warning systems, all help water managers to prepare coping strategies. But it is on the ground, in the individual water basins and communities that the vital coping actions have to be taken. The strong message going out to governments and disaster relief agencies is that locally planned, locally managed adaptation to changing climatic circumstances is practical, beneficial and cost effective.

Now let me turn to the other question: **What impact will this symposium have? What are our next steps?**

The political outreach of this conference can be remarkable. We had participants from 24 European countries, from EU institutions, from several international stakeholder and non-governmental organisations as well as from UN organisations. This shows the growing awareness for the issue and I trust in all of you that you will carry the conclusions and recommendations of this symposium to your specific field of responsibility and spread the message that we urgently need to come to real action.

Second: With the recommendations which you have developed we will hopefully get the attention in the public which has been lacking quite often for these issues. Politics needs pressure from the public. This is how

democracy works, and this is why the recommendations for adaptation are an important outcome of this symposium.

### **What will the German Government do with the outcome of this symposium?**

We will do our best to disseminate the outcome of this symposium and to feed it into the political process. The Executive Director of UNEP Achim Steiner and many others have underlined that the issue of the impact of climate change on the water sector has an important place on the international agenda. We also count on all of you to ensure that the key messages and conclusions of this symposium are heard. The outcome of this meeting will be presented at the Environment Council next week. We will also work together with our colleagues from Portugal who will follow up on the issue with a particular focus on water scarcity and droughts during their presidency in the second half of 2007. I am also confident that the outcome of this symposium will be reflected in upcoming communications announced by the European Commission for this year.

But while developing our own adaptation strategies in the European Union we should not forget about the urgent need to support the developing countries - which are even more seriously affected by impacts of climate change - in adapting to these impacts. This support can for example be provided through mainstreaming adaptation into assistance schemes for developing countries and through international programmes and activities aimed at developing and improving adaptation measures. These include monitoring and the prediction of climate change impacts on water

and water uses risk management, access to climate change risks insurance markets, preparedness and disaster response, methods to avoid and combat further land degradation and the development of more resistant food crops. Such efforts are particularly important in cases where current resource conflicts might be increase by climate change impacts.

We are therefore willing to feed our results as well into the 16th Commission on Sustainable Development in 2008, where water will again be high on the political agenda at the United Nations.

The German Government is proud to have hosted this symposium and we are very happy about the close co-operation with our co-convenor, the DG Environment. You have been hard-working, dedicated participants and wonderful guests, and it has been a pleasure to have you here in Berlin. In particular I want to thank my guests on the panel, some of whom came a long way. This is especially true for you, Mr. Steiner. Thank you so much for coming.

Many people contributed to the successful outcome. I cannot thank them all by name, but I would like to pay a special tribute to a few.

I want to say special thanks to all participants who have chaired meetings and given reports. You have done an excellent job, your input, especially from the working groups, was essential.

Thanks also go to the members of the Steering Committee and the Scientific Committee, which met several times during the last twelve months to advise us and have been of tremendous help.

Substantial factual input and organisational services for the symposium have been provided by Ecologic and the Potsdam Institute for Climate Change Impact Research, and I want to thank the team for its work during the preparation and execution of the Symposium.

Lastly I want to thank the officials in my ministry who have guided the preparations and have supported the minister and myself throughout the symposium. And I promise that we will bring this outcome actively into the various processes on international and European level.

Thank you again for coming here and for your valuable contributions. I wish you all a good and safe journey home.