

Sachbearbeiter/in: Eywo

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Key Note Speech
Annual Conference of the European Environmental Bureau

am Montag, den 26. September 2016 um 10:00 Uhr
im Museum für angewandte Kunst (MAK)
Stubenring 5, 1010 Wien

- Dear President Karlsson, President Maier, ladies and gentlemen.
- It is a great pleasure that for the first time the annual European Environmental Bureau conference is held outside of Brussels, here in Vienna.
- His Holiness Pope Francis, in his recent ground-breaking Encyclical “Laudato si” speaks of the the fragility of our planet – “La fragilità de la planeta”.
- Environmental impacts do not respect national borders; responsible environmental policy aims to hand our natural heritage over to future generations; this is the only sustainable economy and a society based on greater solidarity.
- The motto of this year’s conference “From sustainability talk to policy walk –Stepping up EU action on climate, biodiversity and circular economy” addresses key challenges and environmental issues not only for the European- but also for the global community.

- Both the Paris Climate Agreement and the commitment to the overarching Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can only be achieved with a common effort by all: industrialized and non-industrialized countries, policy-makers, the business community, farmers, NGOs and the civil society as a whole.
- More efforts must now be put into implementation. I am fully supportive of a swift ratification of the Paris Agreement by the EU and its Member States in the run-up to COP 22 in Marrakech. I am happy to say that Austria completed its national ratification process as the third EU Member State this summer.
- It is of utmost importance that the EU as a whole – and the Member States as well – implement Agenda 2030. We are waiting for the communication that is scheduled for November this year. In his report “Sustainability Now!”, former Director General Karl Falkenberg asks for commitment on the highest political level.
- Like the European Parliament he argues in favour of a European Sustainable Development Strategy. I fully support this ambition.
- These two agreements should become the backbone of a new EU vision of positive, transformative change for the EU 27, respecting our planet's ecological limits.
- We should now move this agenda forward, linking it to our forthcoming Presidency in 2018.

Circular Economy

- The proposed Circular Economy Package makes an essential contribution towards a „green future“.
- Waste is not garbage! An ambitious circular economy, building on long term life-cycle thinking, avoiding waste and ensuring the best possible use of resources is beneficial for the environment, the economy and above all, for us citizens.
- As an overall goal it will be important to incorporate EU-wide binding and clear provisions in the area of waste management, to stimulate new markets such as business models based on selling services instead of selling products or to promote the sharing and transfer of knowledge, experience and good practices.
- Changes in values, consumer behaviour and life style are leading to a fundamental re-orientation. Reparability, ban of disposable packaging and reuse of products is also supported by the circular economy package.

Biodiversity

- It is easy to talk about biodiversity when living in a country like Austria. We are rich in species, ecosystems and diversity of landscapes. Around 27% of our territory is under various degrees of protection. Biodiversity is the basis for our living and welfare - our life insurance.
- I am fully committed to achieving our national targets on biodiversity included in the Austrian “2020 Biodiversity Strategy”.

- Our national biodiversity campaign “vielfaltleben” is a flagship project and can thus serve as a model for other EU-Member states. It is also an outstanding example of joint efforts between NGOs and other stakeholders.
- Agriculture is an important part of any solution to safeguard biodiversity. We are proud to rank first in the EU with our 20% share of organic farming.
- The Austrian Agri-Environmental Programme includes targets for the protection and enhancement of biological diversity.

Bioenergy

- Let me address another important topic: bioenergy. Bioenergy is currently delivering more than 60% of all renewable energy consumed in Europe. Sustainability is the key for bioenergy development.
- This renewable energy source will continue to play a central role in decarbonising the European economy.
- Bioenergy is delivered by local communities for local use. Only 4% of total EU bioenergy consumed in Europe is imported, in comparison we are importing 45% of our coal and 90% of our oil.
- There is ample evidence that the local use of wood is of significant environmental and climate benefit. It is also of considerable importance for the development of rural economies and thus also linked to social and economic sustainability.

- Of course an EU harmonised policy on sustainability needs to take into account the existing national policies on sustainable forest management.
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- Ladies and Gentlemen! Let me wish you all the best for your deliberations today. Our responsibility for Europe's environment and for the state in which we want to hand it over to future generations is a joint one.
- Finally I would like to thank the whole staff of the Austrian Museum of Applied Arts making this event possible in their wonderful premises.