



Rat für
NACHHALTIGE
Entwicklung

P r e s s r e l e a s e

Hauff accuses environmental advisory body of provincial thinking on climate protection

Berlin, 8 May 2009 Volker Hauff, a sustainability advisor to the chancellery and a former German Federal Minister for Research and Technology, has criticized what he calls the "provincial" attitude of environmentalists toward commercial-scale separation of the greenhouse gas carbon dioxide (CO₂) in coal and gas power plants. Hauff comments came in response to a statement by the German Advisory Council on the Environment (SRU) that was presented on Wednesday during a session of the German parliament, the Bundestag.

Hauff strongly condemns the dual "business as usual" approach of Germany's energy policy: "We cannot allow Germany to continue to build coal-fired power plants with outdated emissions technologies that send us rushing into a climate mega-disaster. And it is totally unacceptable that we continue to pursue the old illusion that Germany could be completely supplied with power on the basis of renewable energy over the coming decades, and thus needs no energy technology offensive. Neither is true." According to Hauff, Germany could perhaps do without coal over the medium term, "but the world certainly cannot."

Hauff favors the separation and storage of CO₂ from coal-fired power plants, which was discussed in the Bundestag on Wednesday, and he warns against the environmental scientists' efforts to block the proposed legislation. The sustainability expert says that the SRU's opposition to the proposal does not serve to protect the climate. "It is irresponsible for us here at home to reject something that is without an alternative for many countries around the world," says Hauff. He said a beggar-thy-neighbor approach amounts to turning our backs on climate protection. Hauff said this reduces the old saying "Think globally, act locally" to merely "Think locally, act locally."

He said this was particularly irresponsible because, according to the observations of researchers, there are increasing indications that climate change is progressing more rapidly than had been previously forecast while emissions levels are rising faster than all expectations. Hauff anticipates that China, India, the US, Australia and many regions in Africa will have to rely on coal to generate power for many years to come. "Either we assume our responsibilities in Germany and create a technological breakthrough to remove the climate killer CO₂ from the cycle, or we will push these countries toward nuclear energy, and end up with no climate agreement."

Commenting on the technology of separating and storing CO₂, Hauff says: "We don't know if the required technologies will be available on time with the required degree of dependability. But this cannot be a reason for inaction. Quite the contrary, our global responsibility as a country with a remarkable tradition in energy technologies

necessitates at the very least that we point the way toward a future with less CO₂ based on new technologies. The vast majority of experts agree that the proportion of the world's energy generated with coal will not fall below 30 percent before the middle of the century. This represents a huge opportunity for German industry."

The German Council for Sustainable Development called on the German government last autumn to make it clear that no coal power plant without separation technology would be certifiable for operation after 2015, and that in 2010, when it comes time to agree on a successor to the Kyoto Protocol, every new fossil fuel-burning plant must be upgradeable. The Council has also urged the German government to create certification requirements for the storage of CO₂ and proposed that all power plants currently in operation which release more CO₂ than the average hard coal or lignite power plant should undergo improvements.

In its position paper from October, 2008, the German Council for Sustainable Development advocates redirecting the course of Germany's climate policies with the help of the principle of the recycling economy. The current approach to CO₂ currently constitutes the opposite of a recycling economy because all the CO₂ produced is released into the environment. This is reminiscent of the waste disposal practices of the late 1960s. In reaction to this deplorable state of affairs, the concept of the recycling economy was developed and politically implemented. Today, the Council says that we face the huge scientific and social challenge of finding ways of integrating the CO₂ into a cycle, in other words, separating it during the burning process, storing it at first in a controlled manner, and then utilizing it as soon as possible in new processes – knowing full well that storage alone is not an acceptable long-term solution. The Council feels that the recycling principle must become an essential element of energy research, and should encompass all areas and technologies for CO₂-emissions-free energy generation and the storage function of power grids.

The Council

The German Council for Sustainable Development makes proposals and submits recommendations for the sustainability strategy and policies of the German government. Dr. Volker Hauff is the Chairman and Prof. Dr. Klaus Töpfer is the Deputy Chairman of the Council. In May, 2007, German Chancellor Angela Merkel newly appointed them and 11 other Council members from various areas of society. Additional information: www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de.

Sustainability

Sustainable development means giving equal weight to environmental goals alongside economic and social objectives. Sustainable business concepts mean that future generations are left with an intact economic, environmental and social setting.

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