

Overcoming Limits

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Welcome Address at the Annual meeting of the 2030 Implementation Initiative

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A heartfelt and warm welcome on behalf of the German Council for Sustainable Development. Welcome to Germany and to the Sustainability Awards – to what I think is quite a unique practice in sustainable development strategies, here in Germany.

My thanks go to Mr. Ingolf Dietrich and the BMZ as the organizer of the 2030 Implementation Initiative and of your 2018 visit to Germany.

The German Council for Sustainable Development is an independently working stakeholder body. It is mandated and financed by the German Government. However, as regards our work items and agenda we are on our own. The Council is one of the three major German institutions that are implementing the vision and goals for sustainable development. There is an executive structure on the part of the Federal Government, the State Secretaries Commission chaired by the Chief of Staff of the Federal Chancellery (the Prime Minister's Office), and there is a specialized Parliamentary Body, specialized in the sense of using legislative power to supervising the overarching and comprehensive implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

As a stakeholder body, we give advice to the Government. However, there is substantively more: We do address the private sector and we provide specific tools for enterprises to report on their ecologic and social performance. We are localizing the implementation of SDGs; we are empowering a culture of sustainability. On request of the Chancellor Angela Merkel we facilitated the Peer Review Report by Helen Clark and her team of international Peers on the German Sustainability Strategy.

Could this setup be replicated elsewhere? Adapted and fine-tuned so that the setup connects to respective conditions, yes, of course.

I think our 2030 Agenda community needs to overcome the limits of the established rational in academics, politics, and the organized civil society. Sustainable politics need something different. We need to combine R&D knowledge and cultural patterns of empathy and acknowledgement.

That is what you will see on Friday when you visit the Sustainability Awards. It is my great pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the Association-Foundation German Sustainability Awards.

The foundation is a start-up. Its purpose is twofold: One is, celebrating best practice, and by doing so, empowering the next economy and empowering entrepreneurial leadership towards sustainability. Two is, combining data expertise and emotional experience, and by doing so, developing the case of a culture in sustainability.

We encourage the private sector to assume social and ecological responsibility, and to turn engagement into economic change.

As our guests, we are happy to show you the most recent winners of the prestigious sustainability awards. This is the high end of sustainability thinking and practice in Germany.

The Awards are both echoing and expanding the ever-greater acceptance of SD thinking in the German society.

The Awards are an anchor platform for best practice and many strategists who seek to change economic performance of businesses and urban politics, too.

Both is relatively untypical for Germany. Germans are known for their bad temper when dealing with future goals. We tend to over-exaggerate what is missing or failing - as opposed to exchanging good news, thinking in solutions or best practice ideas.

Certainly, the 2030 Agenda is an uphill battle. It would be impossible for the UN to strike an agreement such as the 2030Agenda now. The Sustainable Development Goals **would** contribute to saving the Earth, **would** better the life of people, **would** bring forward sustainable societies, **if realized** for radical transformation.

Transformation is not radical because of big and disruptive ideas. It is radical if you get best practice examples scaled up and if you manage to connect expertise with emotion with ambition. The Sustainability Awards tell this story.

The Awards show that we can make sustainability a part of the DNA of enterprises or local cities. That we actually can turn doubt into curiosity and self-empowerment. You will see proud winners and you will see mutual empowerment in the eyes of others. This is proof for sustainability as a collective effort.

Throughout the world, our common denominator is the UN High Level Political Forum, HLPF. It works as our collective sharing hub. However, we do not yet have the HLPF we need. We need a HLPF that catalyzes progress. This is why your-Implementation Initiative should be expanded. Why don't

we have “coalitions of early achievers” of 2030 goals? Why don't we give examples for what is possible and, for first movers, what delivers advantages?

The whole story of SD is a story of how to bring people in. Not in the sense of dragging them by dystopia but understanding development as a field where their individuality adds value, where competences are required, where life is. Where collectivity is not opposing the individuality of best performance.

I wish you a good stay and fruitful contacts.