

GERMANY – A “DEVELOPING COUNTRY”

TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE WITH THE “2030 AGENDA”

Winfried Weck



Winfried Weck is the Coordinator for Development Policy and Human Rights at the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung in Berlin.

2015, the year of summits, is a key year for the international community. It is possibly even the most significant year since 1992, when the seminal UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio took place, at which Agenda 21 and four further key documents on sustainable development were adopted.¹

The Gavi Replenishment Conference, the Vaccine Alliance, held on 27 January in Berlin and the G7 Elmau Summit held on 7 and 8 June were the first two important and successful events of 2015. These set the scene for the remaining summit agenda of the year.² But the main highlights of the year are considered to be the UN General Assembly in New York from 25 to 27 September and the COP21 Climate Change Summit on 7 and 8 December, as heads of state and government assembled in New York agreed on the agenda for sustainable development, known as the 2030 Agenda, and a legally binding agreement on the global reduction of greenhouse

- 1 | These are (1) the Rio Declaration (officially: Rio Declaration on Environment and Development), which enshrines the right to sustainable development for the first time; (2) the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, which envisaged a 60 per cent reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2050; (3) the Convention on Biological Diversity and (4) Non-Legally Binding Authoritative Statement of Principles for a Global Consensus on the Management, Conservation and Sustainable Development of All Types of Forests.
- 2 | The Gavi Vaccine Alliance is a public-private partnership initiative founded in 2000 by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, aimed at providing global vaccination for all children. The original funding of some 750 million U.S. dollars was sufficient to vaccinate 440 million children against life-threatening diseases such as diphtheria, tetanus, yellow fever and whooping cough. At the pledging conference in Berlin, hosted under the patronage of Chancellor Angela Merkel, funding was secured for the immunisation of a further 330 million children.

gases is to be approved in Paris. The two conventions jointly serve as the starting point for a new era of global cooperation, assuming all nations take future threats seriously and are prepared to address the related challenges. The Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which took place in Addis Ababa in July, defined fundamental key features of the required funding framework for the implementation of sustainable development goals under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.³

This article begins by taking a look back at the various historic milestones set by the international community from Rio to the present day in order to place the 2030 Agenda in a meaningful historic context. This is followed by an examination of the contents of this agenda, illustrating that it cannot be reduced to a list of 17 sustainable development goals, but represents a holistic global project that is unprecedented in its scope and will therefore pose a great number of new challenges to the international community.

THE LONG ROAD FROM AGENDA 21 TO THE 2030 AGENDA

In 1992, after the fall of the Iron Curtain and the collapse of the Soviet Union, a new and significantly more peaceful era seemed to be on the horizon. The spirit of optimism generated by the anticipation of the *New World Order* postulated in the early nineties manifested above all in the hope that it would be possible to address the global environmental, climate and development challenges with similarly global answers and actions. Many politicians, academics and experts had already become aware of the fact that “environmental protection” would develop into the central task of the future once the famous report entitled *The Limits to Growth* had been published by the Club of Rome in 1972, but at the latest upon publication of the so-called Brundtland Report in 1987.⁴ In Germany in particular, wide swathes of the general public were definitely aware of these new environmental challenges: forest dieback and acid rain, the ozone hole, the destruction of primeval forests and, not least, the anti-nuclear movement had made their mark. And with the end of the East-West conflict, which had

3 | The first International Conference on Financing for Development, which was concerned with funding for the Millennium Development Goals (MDG), took place in 2002 in Monterrey in Mexico. A second conference followed in Doha in 2008.

4 | This refers to the report entitled “Our Common Future” by the UN Commission on Environment and Development chaired by the former Norwegian Prime Minister Gro Harlem Brundtland.

previously acted as the backdrop which affected everything, the course was now clear to also engage in efforts at a global level and address the problems of the environment with heightened euphoria and enthusiasm. This was the spirit in which the 108 heads of state and government, who had convened in Rio in 1992, adopted Agenda 21, which declared sustainable development the central global challenge of the 21st century.



Dead spruces: The death of the forest and acid rain were wildly debated topics in the Federal Republic of Germany in the 1980s. The society's sensitisation to sustainability stemming from this period continues to this day. | Source: © R. Kaufung, picture alliance/blickwinkel.

This historic, seminal conference in Rio paved the way for a number of follow-up conferences focusing on different key aspects, all connected to the fundamental concept of sustainable development: in 1993 the World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna and the Global Forest Conference in Jakarta, in 1994 the International Conference on Population and Development in Cairo and the UN Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nassau, in 1995 the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, the World Summit for Social Development in Copenhagen and the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Berlin, the first Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP1), in 1996 the World Food Summit in Rome and HABITAT II in Istanbul (UN Conference on Human Settlements), in 1997 the UN Climate Change Conference in Kyoto (COP3) with the adoption of the protocol of

the same name and the Conference of Parties to the Convention to Combat Desertification in Rome.

This first series of international conferences culminated in the largest meeting of heads of state and government at the time, the UN Millennium Summit in New York in 2000, where 189 UN member states adopted the Millennium Declaration. This described four spheres of action for securing the global future:

1. Peace, security and disarmament
2. Development and poverty eradication
3. Protecting our common environment
4. Human rights, democracy and good governance

On this basis, a panel of experts including representatives from the UN, the World Bank, the OECD and various non-governmental organisations drew up a list of eight goals, which UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan presented to the international public in 2001 under the title "Road Map towards the Implementation of the United Nations Millennium Declaration". These Millennium Development Goals (MDG) represented a consistent progression from the development goals that had been agreed at an international level during the UN conferences of the 1990s. The following goals were to be achieved by 2015:

The Millennium Development Goals represented a consistent progression from the development goals that had been agreed at an international level during the UN conferences of the 1990s.

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development

In addition, targets and indicators were set down to define the objectives in detail. With respect to the first goal for instance, two targets specified that both the proportion of people whose income is less than a dollar a day and the proportion of people who suffer from hunger were to be halved between 1990 and 2015. A third target was added in 2008, demanding the realisation of full

employment and decent work for all, including women and young people.⁵

The MDG were not embedded in a framework of international law. Realisation of the goals can therefore not be legally enforced, nor can any legal sanctions be applied in the event of failure.

Generally, the MDG were aimed at developing countries (even in the case of goals 7 and 8, which appeared to have global relevance at first glance), but they were not embedded in a framework of international law. Realisation of the goals can therefore not be legally enforced, nor can any legal sanctions be applied in the event of failure. It also remained unclear what responsibility the industrialised countries had in connection with the realisation of the goals. Ultimately, it was left to each donor country to make decisions on the developing country or countries it would support and the amount of funding and the type of assistance it would provide.

Two summits in New York in 2005 and 2010 to review progress on the MDG represented important events, where the achievements made so far were examined and decisions were taken on what strategies needed to be pursued to get back on track with specific goals. In 2010, the representatives of the 150 participating states, which were under pressure from the global financial crisis, further adopted an "Action Agenda" to boost the efficiency of the global MDG engagement, focusing specifically on the financial aspects of the MDG process. The Agenda contained statements to the effect that international financial institutions would have to undergo comprehensive reforms and modernisation measures and that donor countries had to deliver on the promises from the two conferences on development funding in Monterrey in 2002 and in Doha in 2008 in a timely manner. The developing countries' own responsibility was also stressed, particularly regarding the raising of their own funds, for instance through the implementation of fair and effective national taxation systems. In this context, the German government pushed for better international coordination of the global development engagement and efforts to increase funding efficiency.⁶ The summit participants also agreed

5 | An excellent overview of the MDG, their targets and indicators, the achievements to date (based on the UN Millennium Development Goals Report 2014) and the contributions made by Germany can be found on the website of the Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), http://bmz.de/en/what_we_do/principles/german-contribution-to-international-development-policy-goals/index.html (accessed 25 Aug 2015).

6 | Ibid.

that the MDG process would have to be extended beyond 2015 until all goals had been reached in full.⁷

The greatest impulse for the substance of the 2030 Agenda in fact came from outside the MDG process itself. It manifested as one of the key outcomes of the so-called Rio+20 Conference of 2012, which had been organised once again in Rio de Janeiro on the occasion of the 20-year anniversary of the Rio UNCED Conference of 1992. At what was officially called the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD), the 190 participating countries adopted an outcome document entitled "The World We Want" and agreed to initiate a process to draw up sustainable development goals, building on the MDG, which was to converge with the MDG process after 2015. The signatory states agreed that these new sustainable development goals (SDG) for short, should fulfil ten fundamental conditions. They should

1. be based on Agenda 21 adopted in Rio in 1992 and on the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation adopted at the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg in 2002,
2. fully respect all the Rio Principles,
3. be consistent with international law,
4. build upon commitments already made,
5. contribute to the full implementation of the outcomes of all major summits in the economic, social and environmental fields,
6. focus on priority areas for the achievement of sustainable development, guided by the outcome document,
7. address and incorporate in a balanced way all three dimensions of sustainable development and their interlinkages,
8. be coherent with and integrated into the United Nations development agenda beyond 2015,
9. not divert focus or effort from the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, and
10. include active involvement of all relevant stakeholders, as appropriate, in the process.⁸

7 | For an evaluation of the MDG process see also the article by Sabina Wölkner in this issue.

8 | Cf. UN, Division for Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/topics> (accessed 27 Jul 2015).

In addition, the SDG should be action-oriented, concise, easy to communicate, limited in number, aspirational, global in nature and universally applicable to all countries.



Brazil in 2012: The creation in terms of content of the 2030 Agenda can be traced back to the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development. | Source: © Antonio Lacerda, picture alliance/dpa.

In the outcome document, the UN Secretary-General was mandated to form an inter-governmental Open Working Group (OWG) to draw up a proposal for the sustainable development goals. The 30-strong Open Working Group met 13 times between 14 March 2013 and 18 July 2014, with rotating attendance to ensure participation by members from all regions of the world and all interest groups, until it was ready to submit its official proposal for the SDG at the 68th session of the UN General Assembly on 8 September 2014. Germany shared a seat in the OWG with France and Switzerland. The ideas on linking development and sustainability, the principles of global partnership and the global validity of the goals incorporated into the OWG proposal show a clear German influence.

THE 2030 AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

From 25 to 27 September 2015, the United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015,⁹ which representatives from almost all 193 member states attended, officially adopted the 2030

9 | Cf. UN, Division for Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, "United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015", <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/post2015/summit> (accessed 25 Aug 2015).

Agenda for Sustainable Development. They discussed the contents of the agenda for sustainable development and adopting it, preferably without significant changes. It should be without significant changes because the proposal by the Open Working Group represents a compromise, and calling it into question would considerably delay the entire 2030 Agenda process.

The first point to make is that the 2030 Agenda comprises not just the SDG, but is made up of four parts in total:

1. The political declaration by the signatory states,
2. the sustainable development goals (SDG) and targets,
3. the means of implementation (MoI) and
4. the follow-up and review process.

While the SDG catalogue with the targets, which had been at the center of the experts' discussions, forms the core, it is only part of the overall package, which has been assembled while bearing the experiences gained from the MDG process in mind.

1. The Political Declaration

This is the political commitment by the signatory states to the implementation of the goals of the agenda for sustainable development. The content of this declaration of intent, which was published under the working title "Transforming Our World – A Call for Global Action" and has been accepted by both state and non-state actors, was already discussed at an inter-governmental level back in February 2015 in New York. It was to comprise a total of 15 paragraphs and no more than three pages.¹⁰

"Leave no one behind" is one of the most important principles set forth in the declaration. The SDG will not be considered fulfilled until all countries and groups have realised them. No social group, no country is to be excluded from the post-2015 process or prevented from pursuing it. Further principles include human rights as the foundation of all action, striving for structural transformation, the integration of the different sustainability dimensions of

10 | UN, Division for Sustainable Development, Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform, "Discussion Document for Declaration", https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/6155_Discussion%20Document%20for%20for%20Declaration%2019%20Feb.pdf (accessed 25 Aug 2015). The adopted version was not available at time of printing.

the environment, the economy and the social sphere as well as strengthened global partnership.

The central statement is, in fact, hidden away in a later paragraph of the declaration, which makes reference to the “universality” of the 2030 Agenda. While the MDG had been designed as tasks to be addressed directly by the developing countries, for which the global North could make contributions as it saw fit, the SDG are conceived as global challenges, which all countries of the world need to address. Our planet is perceived as “One World”;¹¹ the traditional divisions into developing and industrialised countries, North and South, beneficiaries and donors are becoming obsolete since all are expected to perform their specific tasks in shaping a sustainable future for our planet, so that coming generations will have a world worth living in. To take a phrase: As of September 2015, Germany will be a “developing country” just like Peru, the Gambia or Bangladesh. Once the SDG agenda takes effect, the term “developing country” will become totally redundant and replaced by new realities. While there will still be rich and poor, the disparity will not be as much at state level as within individual societies.

This development is not a futuristic vision but a global reality in the making, which can be observed already in numerous countries in diverse regions of the world. The universality of the 2030 Agenda is therefore neither an abstract idea nor utopian lip service. Instead, it is the consequence of a fair and equitable global allocation of tasks that address not only states and their respective governments but also the regions and communities, society as well as individuals and their families, civil society actors as well as regionally or internationally active businesses. This concept of the acceptance of responsibility by all parties embodies the second fundamental aspect of universality in the 2030 Agenda.

2. The Sustainable Development Goals

While the product of the Open Working Group’s work is consistent with the requirement from the above-mentioned Rio+20 Declaration for the SDG to be “global in nature and universally applicable to all countries”, the 17 goals and 169 targets (!) are clearly in contrast to two requirements mentioned earlier, namely

11 | In Germany, the BMZ uses the joint spelling “EineWelt” in most of its official publications today to convey the idea.

for the SDG to be “easy to communicate” and “limited in number”. It appears that the members of the OWG found these requirements impossible to reconcile, and they actually justified the high number of goals with the need for universality. As the SDG and their targets address all actors worldwide, the actors’ diverse interests, wishes and demands needed to be reflected in the SDG catalogue. One of the consequences of this is that not all actors can or should address all the goals, let alone all the targets, at the same time. Only a small number of countries, Germany included, will therefore take on the challenge of making strides in implementing all 17 goals, both in the country itself and via its multilateral or bilateral work with partner countries to support them in their efforts to realise the SDG. While Germany will not need to put in place national plans to eradicate hunger, for instance (Goal 2: End hunger, achieve food security and improved nutrition and promote sustainable agriculture),¹² land-locked countries such as Bolivia, Slovakia and Uzbekistan cannot be expected to make any substantial contributions to Goal 14 (Conserve and sustainably use the oceans, seas and marine resources for sustainable development). Goal 2 further illustrates that certain aspects of a goal can be of little relevance with respect to implementation in individual countries (in Germany’s case: end hunger), while other aspects may indeed pose challenges for them (promote sustainable agriculture).

Not all actors can or should address all goals, let alone all targets, at the same time. Only a small number of countries, Germany included, will take on the challenge.

Despite explanations along these lines, the criticism by many national and international NGOs in particular has focused on the large number of goals and targets, usually making reference to the concisely worded eight Millennium Development Goals.¹³ The question many ask is this: How can 17 goals and 169 targets be conveyed to the general public? UN Secretary-General Ban

12 | Instead, we would need plans for reducing the enormous mountain of food waste in Germany. According to a study by Stuttgart University published in March 2012, which was conducted on behalf of the Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, some eleven million tons of food waste are generated in Germany alone each year. That corresponds to 135 kilograms of food waste per head of the population per year! Cf. Federal Ministry of Food and Agriculture, “Ermittlung der Mengen weggeworfener Lebensmittel und Hauptursachen für die Entstehung von Lebensmittelabfällen in Deutschland. Zusammenfassung einer Studie der Universität Stuttgart (März 2012)”, http://bmel.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/Ernaehrung/WvL/Studie_Lebensmittelabfaelle_Faktenblatt.pdf (accessed 25 Aug 2015).

13 | The partly controversial discussion about the 17 SDG and the 169 targets is also put under the spotlight in Wölkner, n. 7.

Ki-moon responded to this criticism in a synthesis report on the Agenda 2030, which was published on 4 December 2014. In this report, he presented six principles covering the 17 goals. He did not, however, clearly assign the individual SDG to specific principles as some of them can be associated with more than one (see table). The principles classify the SDG under the categories:

- Dignity: to end poverty and fight inequality;
- prosperity: to grow a strong, inclusive and transformative economy;
- justice: to promote safe and peaceful societies and strong institutions;
- partnership: to catalyse global solidarity for sustainable development;
- planet: to protect our ecosystems for all societies and our children;
- people: to ensure healthy lives, knowledge and the inclusion of women and children.¹⁴



Animal husbandry and solar energy: While Germany is not in need of national projects toward combating hunger, the promotion of sustainable agriculture is an important aspect of the SDG. | Source: © Ringo Chiu, picture alliance/ZUMA Press.

14 | UN, "The Road to Dignity by 2030: Ending Poverty, Transforming all Lives and Protecting the Planet. Synthesis Report of the Secretary General On the Post-2015 Agenda", p.14, http://un.org/disabilities/documents/reports/SG_Synthesis_Report_Road_to_Dignity_by_2030.pdf (accessed 25 Aug 2015).

But in terms of conveying the agenda contents to people all around the world, the 17 development goals themselves or the principles will not play that significant a role; instead, it will be indirect routes that can bring certain aspects of the 2030 Agenda home to people. One example is the Partnership for Sustainable Textiles, which was established by the Federal Ministry for Development and Cooperation, and the associated logo with a downloadable app for accessing information about the value and content of ecolabels and/or the Fairtrade brand in the textile sector. While this encourages consumers directly to purchase textiles that have been produced in an ecologically and socially “clean” manner and without endangering workers’ health, they are only indirectly aware that they have just made a small, but collectively important contribution to the global implementation of sustainable production and supply chains and thereby to the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

Fig. 1

The Six Principles of Sustainable Development



Source: Own Illustration based on UN, n. 14, p. 20.

Fig. 2
The 17 Goals of Sustainable Development



Source: Own Illustration. For the 17 goals of sustainable development:
©©© The Global Goals for Sustainable Development,
<http://globalgoals.org> (accessed 21 Sep 2015). © racken.

3. The Financial Means to Implement the SDG

One important lesson learned from the MDG process is that in addition to coming to an agreement on new development goals, the international community must attend to the question of how

to fund their implementation promptly as well. During the first phase of the MDG process, the question of how to fund their implementation was not discussed until the specially convened Conference on Financing for Development in Monterrey in March 2002, the outcome of which was documented in the Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development or Monterrey I for short. The question of funding was therefore not put on the international agenda until two years after the MDG had been adopted! However, with the Monterrey Conference, the issue of development funding was definitively brought to the attention of all actors as a fundamental part of the global debate on development policy; the follow-up conference consequently already took place in 2008 in Doha (Monterrey II).

On the basis of these lessons learned, the 67th UN General Assembly, which took place in September 2013, set up the 30-strong Intergovernmental Committee of Experts on Sustainable Development Financing. Its remit was to check which development funding sources were available and how they could be used most efficiently. Its findings were to inform the drafting of the strategies for funding the sustainable development goals and serve as a basis for the third UN Conference on Financing for Development, which took place in Addis Ababa from 13 to 16 July 2015.

The conference objective was to create a robust framework for global development funding for the following ten to 15 years, which would interconnect all sources of funding and realise the best possible synergies with respect to the objectives of the three sustainable development dimensions that needed funding. In addition, a catalogue of 100 reproducible measures was to be drawn up that could be used by individual countries to contribute to the implementation of the sustainable development agenda through concrete political actions to mobilise all resources – in the areas of funding as well as technology, innovation and commerce. While the conference did ultimately not succeed in coming to an agreement on the hotly debated establishment of a UN tax body, Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon stressed the positive outcomes of the conference: “The results here in Addis Ababa give us the foundation of a revitalised global partnership for sustainable development that will leave no one behind.”¹⁵ For other actors, particularly from the NGO sector, the resolutions of Addis Ababa lagged far

15 | Cf. Eliza Anyangwe, “Glee, relief and regret: Addis Ababa outcome receives mixed reception”, *The Guardian*, 16 Jul 2015, <http://gu.com/p/4ayhb/stw> (accessed 25 Aug 2015).

behind expectations. They had hoped for further concessions by OECD states with respect to trade facilitation and the establishment of an international tax regime.¹⁶

The outcome document of the Conference of Addis Ababa was presented to the UN Special Summit for approval as part of the 2030 Agenda.

4. Procedures for Monitoring the Implementation

All actors should be audited regularly by UN institutions with respect to their progress in the implementation of their own sustainability plans.

Complementing the declaration, the catalogue of goals and the funding framework, the comprehensive follow-up and review mechanism forms the fourth integral part of the sustainable development agenda. All actors (states and regions or multinational institutions such as the European Union, commercial enterprises, large civil society organisations, etc.) should be audited regularly by UN institutions with respect to their progress in the implementation of their own sustainability plans. The appropriate body will be the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), which functions under the auspices of ECOSOC and began operating in September 2013. Besides its remit to monitor the entire agenda process, the HLPF is to take on a political leadership role, provide recommendations and orientation, and act as a link between politics and science.

The follow-up and review procedures will serve fine-tuning and controlling programs and measures during the implementation phase, toward ensuring comparability between individual states, identifying best-practice measures, and determining conclusive outcomes after programs have come to an end. They are also intended to ensure that the sustainability and action plans of the individual actors are neither overblown nor trivial, but both ambitious and in line with realistic objectives. As there is not a wealth of past experience to draw on in this area, many questions remain unresolved. Practicable solutions will likely not emerge until the implementation phase scheduled to begin in 2016 (for instance the question as to whether actors will submit voluntarily to an evaluation or the scope and timing of the evaluation). Germany intends to set a good example here and has therefore declared its willingness to have its national sustainability plan and the achieved results subjected to a comprehensive evaluation as soon as 2016.

16 | Cf. Wölkner, n. 7, p. 36.

OUTLOOK

In conclusion, there is the question as to whether the 2030 Agenda will truly set humanity on the path to a sustainable future. The realistic answer is probably that we are definitely going in the right direction, despite the obstacles and setbacks that are to be expected. Does a conceivable alternative even exist? Clearly, the commitments and declarations of intent by the individual state and non-state actors will need to be followed up with a multitude of actions, measures, initiatives and programs, which must range from the global scope to the international, national and regional scope to the local and even family scope. Establishing a general awareness of the issue of sustainability is taking on central significance here, and may become the actual challenge. No doubt there will be some surprises with respect to the countries and institutions that will become the promoters of sustainable development over the next 15 to 20 years. Only actors capable of making relevant contributions over the long term will be able to act as opinion-makers and provide leadership for action in an increasingly problematic environment.

Clearly, the commitments and declarations of intent by actors will need to be followed up with a multitude of measures which must range from the global and local to the family scope.

Now that the sustainable development agenda is about to be adopted, the task for all governments worldwide will be to create national sustainability plans based on the 17 SDG and 169 targets, which will bear subsequent evaluation. To allow such sustainability plans to be created in the first place, studies will need to be conducted to take stock of the current societal, social and environmental circumstances. This in itself will pose a challenge to many countries, because they do not have the appropriate research institutes or instruments to collect solid data. For a country such as Germany, which created its first national sustainability plan back in 2002 and has been updating it every year on the basis of a virtually unlimited wealth of data, this is an area where it can offer essential and timely support and assistance with the creation of national sustainability strategies to countries that have inadequate resources for conducting research and devising their own national sustainability goals and targets.

Looking back at the process history from Rio 1992 to New York 2015, it is obvious that environment and development have been linked from the beginning. Numerous international conferences have accompanied and illustrated the progressive merging of the

two policy areas. When speaking about sustainable development, we now consider it a matter of course that the development goals, which relate predominantly to people, and the environmental goals, which relate more to the planet, represent two sides of the same coin. This should also be borne in mind more strongly when making decisions on departmental remits when governments are formed in the future so that greater synergy effects can be realised in the implementation of Germany's national sustainability agenda and its bilateral and international contributions to the 2030 Agenda.

Incidentally, sustainability as an instruction for action is a German invention! It was over 300 years ago that Hans Carl von Carlowitz, tax accountant and mining administrator, used the term in connection with sustainable forestry: "Only cut down as much timber as the forest can cope with. As much timber as can grow back." An admonition that was as pioneering as it was simple!