

## ECOGERMA 2013

### Round table debate “Energy, innovation, climate!”

**For the fifth time now, the German-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce and Industry organized the sustainability congress ECOGERMA in São Paulo. The Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation contributed to the overall event with a round table debate on “Energy, innovation, climate!”**

This year’s edition of the ECOGERMA had been held under the motto of “German-Brazilian experiences” and focused on aspects such as photovoltaic, mobility, energy and waste management. For this purpose, companies and representatives of international organizations such as the German Society for International Cooperation (GIZ) and the World Bank as well as the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation hosted discussion rounds which were centered on the challenges concerning both international partners.

Moreover, the potential for the transfer of German „best-practice“-experiences concerning the promotion of sustainable innovations for the Brazilian market had been discussed intensively. This would provide all interested parties with an opportunity for the creation of new cooperation networks as well as the wide reaching exchange of personal and organizational experiences.

The opening speech by the German-Brazilian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, was followed by a ceremony in which Martius-Price was awarded for outstanding projects in the categories “humanity”, “nature” and “technology”. For the rest of the day, the present participants were able to attend a series of speeches and presentations given by Brazilian, German and other international speakers.

On the second day, the round table of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation “Energy, innovation, climate!” focused on political issues, and thus contrasted itself from the rest of the conference, which was mostly technical and economic in nature. The table was moderated by Gregory Ryan, project coordinator of the Konrad-Adenauer-Foundation. The round table format, known as “fish-bowl”, aimed at involving the audience actively in discussions with the speakers.

After a short opening of the table by Mr Ryan, the word was passed first to João Viégas. Besides his activity as professor for international relations at the University Candido Mendes, Mr Viegas serves as technical expert for historic and cultural heritage to the Public Prosecutor’s Office of the State of Rio de Janeiro.

Speaking from his experience as a member of a public institution, he opened by relating some of the problems that occur when importing best-practice-experiences to the areas of climate protection and energy from foreign countries. Mr Viegas especially stressed the lack of binding guidelines and control instruments that accompany a given implementation of a transferred technology. He said that without such guidelines and control instruments, a sustainable transfer of projects can’t be successful in the long run. Further, he advised against a mere transfer of technology which can’t have a sustainable outcome without the corresponding organizational and legislative structures. To this end, he explicitly asked for the participation of the broader society, which, in his opinion, should get involved actively in the process of implementation of rules and standards in order to guarantee a sustainable and long-term change.

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Second to speak was Yves Ehlert, representative of the German Corporation for Investment and Development (DEG). He spoke about opportunities and challenges for climate protection and energy innovations in Brazil. Thereby, he especially stressed the enormous potential of Brazil in the area of biogas and solar energy which still hasn't been exhausted. However, he pointed out as well that missing governmental subsidies, especially in the field of solar energy, would slow down the development of this promising sector. Especially small and middle-size enterprises could – according to Mr Ehlert – contribute to a boost of energy efficiency what, nevertheless, depends on the Brazilian Development Bank (BNDES) and similar institutions to facilitate the required initial investments.

Third to speak was Caetano Scannavino Filho, project coordinator of the non governmental organization Saúde e Alegria. This NGO, which is based in Santarem in Northern Brazil, is committed to promote the participation of the civil society in an integrative and sustainable manner into the communal development in the Amazonas region. Within his work, Mr Scannavino is confronted daily with negative consequences that infrastructural projects hold for the indigenous tribes that live in the Amazonas region. He mentions, for example, the construction of the waterworks Belo Monte in the federal state Pará as example of a controversially discussed implementation of a project in the field of climate and energy because it seems to cause problematic consequences for the indigenous tribes that had been located there for centuries. In this context, he calls for careful research and better planning when thinking about drawing up and implementation such projects, so as that these projects are able to actually achieve their purpose of contributing to climate protection and energy efficiency while being at the same time consistent with the local conditions and, first and foremost, with the necessities of the local societies.

Last but not least, the microphone was handed to Eduardo Viola, professor for International Relations at the University of Brasilia and consultant for climate issues to

the Brazilian Foreign Ministry. Mr Viola presented several insights into the ongoing moment of political change in Brazil. He, for example, considers the current protests not only as a potentially positive movement that could lead towards an improvement of democracy as it is practiced in Brazil, but interprets the present atmosphere of change as well as the aspired political reform agenda as an opportunity for a political change of paradigms that could clear the way for implementation of a sustainable agenda with the purpose of protecting the climate as well as clear the ground for innovations in the area of energy and mobility. However, while Mr Viola believes that all of these aspirations and hopes depend inevitably on an overcoming of self-serving political interests, the successful cleansing of the almost endogenous corrupt Brazilian political system as well as the significant improving of the Brazilian educational system. Further reflecting on the suddenness and intensity of the protests, Mr Viola, who was born in Argentina, but who had chose Brazil as his home decades ago, said that he had not thought that they would take place at this moment in time, adding that he believes them to be a great opportunity as a catalyst that could lead to serious political change with many its positive consequences for the area of innovation, climate protection and the wellbeing of the Brazilian citizen in general.

Following the short presentations of the four speakers, each of them had been given the possibility to comment on the assumptions of their colleagues and finally the table had also been opened to the audience. This led again to an enrichment of the discussion by various interesting aspects such as the question concerning the meaning as well as the adequateness of the expression "sustainability". According to Caetano, this expression should be avoided because of its lacking precision and ambivalent application by different interest groups. In the opinion of one of the members of the audience "sustainability" should be perceived in a more holistic manner comprehending the three different dimensions "environment", "society" and "economy". A group of students on the other hand brought up the ve-

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ry practical question of how they could contribute with some kind of grassroots activities to a rethinking of environmental issues; and they further came up with a more ideological question on possibilities to overcome the traditional Brazilian culture of consumerism.

Finally, another voice from the audience addressed the enormous shortcomings of governmental energy projects as for example the construction of several wind turbines in the North-east of Brazil which still haven't been connected to the grid. Another observation that resulted from the discussion is that the Brazilian society has to learn to engage itself more actively in politics in order to avoid for example the construction of further atomic power plants as they are plants in Angra dos Reis.

Altogether, the round table enriched the ECOGERMA with a diverse and multilateral political discussion that benefitted from the diverse academic and personal backgrounds of the speakers as well as from the active participation of the audience. By doing so, the round table managed successfully to address a large spectrum of issues such as the recent protests in Brazil, political challenges, questions on climate and energy as well as the responsibility of the society concerning climate and environmental protection.