



## EDITORIAL

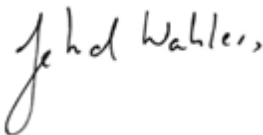
Dear Readers,

At the invitation of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, German and Chinese experts met last November to discuss political approaches to sustainable development in major cities. The German-Chinese Symposium on Urbanization was held in a new development in Xuzhou. Located between Beijing and Shanghai, this city is probably unknown to most people outside China – yet it has a population of nine million. It is steadily growing thanks to state-funded construction projects. The government investments are so extensive that they far exceed existing demand. High-rise blocks and streets of houses are being built without any tenants or buyers to occupy them. Mira Luthe, Project Assistant in our Representative office in Beijing and author of an article in this issue, reports on her visit to the unknown metropolis: “I had previously read that entire new city districts are being built, but to be in a vast, newly developed but as yet unoccupied part of the city myself and see the skeletons of houses and bare tower blocks was something else. I asked myself who was supposed to live there and fill the concrete with life.” She continued: “Xuzhou was an interesting example of what is happening all over the country. I will be interested to see how much progress the urbanisation process will have made in five to ten years and particularly how sustainable it will be.”

Sustainable integrated urban development represents an enormous challenge to the People’s Republic of China. While the Chinese urbanisation rate is still below the global average of 55 per cent, it has assumed dimensions in the world’s most populous country that are difficult to conceive. The number of cities with a population in the millions increases steadily and has already reached 175. Every year, 60 million Chinese villagers move into cities searching for work and better infrastructure. Many of the cities are growing in an uncontrolled manner, with serious consequences for the ecosystem as well as the food supply. Speaking at

an event organised by the Shanghai office of the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung, Wang Hui, a professor at Xiamen University, pointed out that 53 per cent of the area used for expanding Chinese cities consists of arable land.

The trend towards urbanisation is not just a Chinese phenomenon, but can be observed around the world. The United Nations estimate that two thirds of the global population will live in cities within 30 years. This will pose a variety of challenges to politicians and administrators: road congestion, air pollution, water shortages, difficulties with waste disposal as well as an increased risk of negative impacts from environmental disasters due to climate change particularly in coastal areas. Megacities and conurbations have joined forces at a global level to compare approaches to shaping economic growth and urban development in more sustainable ways and to collaborate in the search for solutions. The KAS office in Rio de Janeiro has initiated and supported one project aiming in this direction: the CB27. This network brings together the heads of the departments for environmental affairs from the capitals of all Brazilian federal states and the Federal District. Project Manager Kathrin Zeller writes in this issue: "The measures taken in dealing with growth in these new centres of the emerging economies, which will combine an increasing part of the world's population as well as its economic output, will be instrumental in determining the level of sustainability of global development." The shape of the future will not be determined solely in Berlin and Washington but also in Xuzhou and São Paulo.



Dr. Gerhard Wahlers  
Deputy Secretary General

gerhard.wahlers@kas.de