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PRESS RELEASE OF THE UNITED NATIONS ORGANIZATIONS IN BONN

20 years of the UN in Bonn: From the Seed of an Idea to a Powerhouse of Global Sustainability

Germany, Bonn, 8 March 2016 – In 2016, the family of United Nations Organizations together with partners celebrate their 20th anniversary in Bonn along with visiting UN Secretary general Ban Ki-moon. German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier has invited the Secretary General and the leaders of the UN in Bonn to participate in a panel discussion: “20 years of Bonn as a UN city – shaping a sustainable future in the light of volunteering”. The event, in the World Conference Centre Bonn payed tribute to the work of the 18 UN agencies based in the city. At the same time it provided insights into how people all over the world are volunteering their skills and services under the banner of the United Nations Volunteers to support and speed up progress on sustainable development worldwide.

Minister [Steinmeier](#), welcoming over 300 guests, said: *“Over the past 20 years, Bonn has become one of the most important locations for the United Nations. Every day, over 1000 staff members work here with great dedication – particularly in the field of climate protection and sustainable development – to ensure a positive future. However, this is not the only success story here today. For me, Bonn primarily stands for the commitment of countless volunteers who work worldwide for peace, climate protection and human rights. We are very grateful to the UN Volunteers all over the world and pay tribute to them, not only because they provide concrete help, but also because they play a crucial role in shaping the process of understanding and reconciliation between societies – a process that is one of the fundamental tenets of our foreign policy.”*

In his presentation the [UN Secretary-General](#) quoted German Poem “Moral” by Erich Kästner “Nothing good is achieved unless you do it.” (“Es gibt nichts Gutes, außer man tut es”) and commended the German partners for their firm commitment over the past two decades. *“Here on the banks of the Rhine River, a truly historic place, the United Nations in Bonn has grown from the seed of an idea to a true centre for sustainable global development.”* He continued, *“it takes a lot of vision, courage and stamina and from time to time also a bit of good luck to develop a global center for sustainable development in only 20 years. I would like to congratulate all involved – be it on a national, regional or local level – who have made Bonn the UN centre for government efforts to shape a sustainable future.”*

Christiana Figueres, the Executive Secretary of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and current Chair of the Heads of the UN Agencies in Germany highlighted: *“The focus of the UN in Bonn is nothing less than the sustainable future of humanity on Earth. We are here to help governments and peoples find answers and ways for a sustainable future on this planet. UN Bonn is unique! From very diverse perspectives, we are all working towards this common goal.”*

In the 2nd part of the event the important contribution of volunteers in the context of developing a sustainable future were presented and discussed by the high-level panelists. Three UN Volunteers serving in Morocco, Serbia and Mongolia presented their personal experiences of being UN Volunteers. The Executive Coordinator of the UN Volunteers, **Richard Dictus** added: *“These three dynamic young women show us how UN Volunteers add professional capacity to the United Nations. Our volunteers are people-centred, value-driven and are known to be a force for increased dynamism, creativity and innovation wherever they are engaged.”*

With regards to the UN Volunteers, the **Secretary-General** added *“On the ground and in the field, the UN Volunteers often represent the UN at its best. They walk the talk and deliver for people by people. No matter whether a natural disaster strikes or a medical crisis hits, volunteers are right there where they are needed.”*

The Lord Mayor of the Federal City of Bonn, Mr. **Alexander-Ashok Sridharan**, appreciated the high-level discussion and thanked moderator Ms. Anke Rasper of Deutsche Welle. *“Bonn says thank you for twenty years of United Nations in our city and for twenty years of diversity and dialogue to shape a sustainable future for our planet.”*

Pictures of the event (credits: UN Bonn/ Volker Lannert) will be uploaded shortly after the event: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/unbonn/albums/72157663273404284/with/25316057000/>

Background

What is the context of this event?

Humankind is currently living as if it had 3 or 4 planets to live on and is developing in a way that destroys the ecosystems humanity depends on. Meanwhile millions of people suffer from hunger and disease and numerous wildlife species are threatened due to pollution and degradation. The overall situation requires fundamental research and guidance at all levels. Humankind needs special skills and education to accomplish this. UN Bonn with its 18 entities and nearly 1000 staff members is here to work on solutions to resolve some of the greatest challenges of humankind. These challenges are global and intertwined. There are no quick fixes and no one is capable of solving them alone. Despite the magnitude of the challenges, there are already solutions at hand. The UN volunteers – next to other UN Bonn entities - provide these hand on solutions. Through highly qualified and motivated individuals they contribute to peace and development.

How did the UN develop in Bonn over the years?

The United Nations have had offices in Bonn since 1951. In 1996, Haus Carstanjen was handed over to the United Nations - represented by Boutros Boutros-Ghali, former UN Secretary General - by Angela Merkel, former Federal Minister for the Environment, Germany. The presence of the United Nations Volunteers Programme (UNV), the Climate Change Secretariat (UNFCCC) and other UN agencies marked the starting point for further development of the UN location. In summer 2006, the UN presences in Bonn grew and the UN Campus was officially inaugurated by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan and German Chancellor Angela Merkel. The buildings Langer Eugen and Haus Carstanjen hosted at that time 14 UN agencies. In 2013, the UN campus the Old Abgeordnetenhaus was incorporated to the UN Campus. From a handful of employees, the UN presence in Bonn has grown steadily since 1996 and has become a UN family with approximately 1,000 employees.

What is UN Bonn all about?

From Bonn the United Nations supports governments and peoples to find answers and ways towards a sustainable future on this planet. The United Nations in Bonn (UN Bonn) covers with currently 18 organizations a large working area of the UN, including climate change, land degradation, biodiversity and ecosystem services, wildlife conservation, volunteerism, health, human security, disaster risk reduction, tourism, as well as education & training and satellite-based information systems. This not only includes the sustainable use of natural resources and their precautionary preservation for future generations, but also the global fight against poverty.

What does that mean more in detail?

From Bonn, the United Nations are shaping a sustainable future for humanity. They make a key contribution to suggesting options for action to the international community of states. From Bonn efforts are made to...

... combat climate change, describe adaptation measures, but also to address the damage that now seems inevitable;
... protect one billion people from land degradation and global environmental change;
... strengthen disaster risk reduction and emergency response by facilitating access to space-based information;
... support UN efforts for peace and sustainable development through thousands of UN Volunteers in over 100 countries;
... save migratory wildlife species from extinction and protect ecosystems that are vital for human beings;
... promote work and life skills for greening technical and vocational education

Who are the agencies currently present in Bonn?

Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
www.unfccc.int (headquartered in Bonn)

Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) www.unccd.int
(headquartered in Bonn)

United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme www.unv.org (headquartered in Bonn)

Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (UNEP/CMS) www.cms.int

Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (UNEP/AEWA) www.unep-aewa.org

Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic, North East Atlantic, Irish and North Seas (UNEP/ASCOBANS) www.ascobans.org

Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of the Populations of European Bats (UNEP/EUROBATS) www.eurobats.org

Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES) www.ipbes.net

UNESCO International Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNESCO-UNEVOC) www.unevoc.unesco.org

United Nations University, Vice Rectorate in Europe (UNU-ViE) www.vie.unu.edu

United Nations University Institute for Environment and Human Security (UNU-EHS)
www.ehs.unu.edu

United Nations University Institute for the Advanced Study of Sustainability (UNU-IAS) Operating Unit SCYCLE www.ias.unu.edu

United Nations System Staff College – Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development (UNSSC)
<http://www.unssc.org>

World Health Organization, European Centre for Environment and Health (WHO/ECEH)
www.euro.who.int/envhealth

United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR) – Bonn Office www.unisdr.org

United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER) www.un-spider.org

World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Consulting Unit on Tourism and Biodiversity
<http://biodiv.unwto.org>

United Nations Regional Information Centre (UNRIC) www.unric.org/de/

Where can I find more information:

Follow us on Twitter @UNBonn, Facebook.com/UNBonn and Flickr/UNBonn, www.unbonn.org!
The latter is under construction, but will be available in a brand new style soon.

What is UN Volunteers all about?

The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme contributes to peace and development through volunteerism worldwide. UNV works with partners to integrate qualified, highly motivated and well supported UN Volunteers into development programming and promote the value and global recognition of volunteerism.

UNV is active in around 130 countries every year. With Field Presences in over 80 countries.

More than 6,300 United Nations Volunteers and 11,000 United Nations Online Volunteers help millions of people to make sustainable change and peace happen.

Do you have examples on what they do more concretely?

During the Ebola crisis in West Africa, and United Nations Volunteers next to community volunteers and international volunteers were crucial to the response. A similar spirit of volunteerism and solidarity has been on display in addressing the devastating earthquake in Nepal.

UNV has established a Nepal Earthquake Taskforce to coordinate the most effective and needed support on the ground. <http://www.unv.org/what-we-do/unv-response-to-nepal-earthquake.html>;

Further examples according to thematic areas: <http://www.unv.org/what-we-do/thematic-areas.html>;