

**Opening speech from**  
**Maria Krautzberger**  
**President of the German Environment Agency**  
**4<sup>th</sup> European Resources Forum**  
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‘check against delivery’

Dear Excellency,

Dear Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am very pleased to welcome you again to the European Resources Forum in Berlin.

Since 2012 it is the fourth time that the German Environment Agency is staging this conference. This year over 400 participants from 55 countries are here with us. This shows the importance of the European Resources Forum also on the international level.

Our topic is more important than ever: According to the International Resource Panel of the United Nations over 90 billion tons of raw materials were taken from nature worldwide in 2017: three times more than in 1970! Since the world's population is increasing and since the economic performance continues to grow, more and more resources are being used worldwide.

Moreover, competition for increasingly rare resources is intensifying. Rising resource consumption worsens global

environmental problems - such as climate change, land degradation and loss of biodiversity.

If nine billion people - our future world population - will continue with the current production and consumption patterns, our planet will exceed the natural limits to a major degree. But: different from e.g. Climate protection we are still lacking a public debate about this really alarming development. There are no or only very few headlines that illustrate this alarming situation.

At least on the political level the international awareness of the issue has increased. I particularly welcome the G20 resolutions on the sustainable use of natural resources. The German presidency initiated this process. Staging a high-level forum for dialogue on the topic of resource efficiency for the first time is a great achievement. Before the G20 resolutions, the topic was picked up by the G7 in 2015. In addition, a G7-Alliance on Resource Efficiency was created. I hope that G 7 and G 20 will continue on this path.

Nevertheless, in my view the responsible use of our natural resources is not only the task of a limited number of countries. Resource conservation is a joint task of the entire international community.

Therefore we need an international convention on the protection of natural resources and we should lay the groundwork for it soon. Although this is a big challenge and still a long way to go. – Especially in times where multilateral approaches are undermined by many countries throughout the world.

The two key elements of an international convention on the protection of natural resources should be: First, the formulation of overarching principles, and second, joint objectives for a sustainable use of natural resources. To be more specific, the signatories could, for example, commit themselves to quantitative targets for resource efficiency. They could agree on adherence to minimum standards for the fair extraction of raw materials. And an avoidance of the use of raw materials from conflict regions. And why should such a convention not also foster the notion that all natural resources should be understood as a global common good?

We could build our discussions about this resource convention upon the successful G7 and G20 processes. Additionally, we should include the already existing experience from processes related to the Agenda 2030 and the SDGs.

Today we are staging the European Resources Forum. Thus, I would like to take a closer look at the European situation in terms of resource conservation.

In recent years, the European Commission has provided important impetus aimed at reinforcing the sustainable use of natural resources in Europe. The Commission has formulated a strategy for a circular economy and developed a corresponding action plan. As a result, the sustainable use of natural resources has received more attention in many member states. According to the European Environment Agency EEA, sixteen EU Member States plan activities for the development of national policies, strategies and roadmaps for a circular economy. This is remarkable.

*[Germany developed a first national resource efficiency programme – named ProgRess - in 2012. ProgRess describes a wide range of measures. These measures aim at further increasing raw material productivity in Germany. We are currently updating this programme. ]*

According to Eurostat, the statistical office of the European Union, the raw material consumption in the EU decreased. In the period of 2007 to 2016 the raw material consumption decreased by about twenty percent per capita. That is good news. And over the last years the European Union has made good progress in its legislation to protect natural resources. Let me just mention the Circular Economy Package 2018 with the Plastics Strategy and the planned ban on single-use plastics, the Waste Package, the Clean Energy Package or the Biodiversity Action Plan.

But other policy areas, and in particular the issue of resource consumption, have not yet been given enough attention. In an international comparison our raw material consumption is still far too high. Depending upon the

member state it is between eighty to even one hundred percent above the global average. Therefore, we need to continue our joint efforts to foster the transition to sustainable use of natural resources.

Next year we will elect a new European Parliament and a new European Commission will start its work. It is extremely important that Commission, Parliament and Council continue their joint efforts in building a circular economy in the common market.

One important starting point could be an eighth Environment Action Programme. I do hope that the new Commission will initiate this programme at the end of 2019. The sustainable use of natural resources should be included as a central element. The programme should also address the opportunities of digitalization for a sustainable use of resources. In this regard, one session here at the European Resources Forum is dedicated to digitalization. I am eager to learn about findings and hear stimulating ideas.

The German Environment Agency also supports the idea to define measurable targets for resource efficiency at the

European level. Our proposal is that the overall raw material productivity in the EU should be increased by the year 2030. We think that the raw material productivity should be increased by at least by thirty percent in comparison to 2014. This would signalize how important a decoupling of raw material demand from economic growth and negative environmental impacts is.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The sustainable use of natural resources is a complex policy area because of the many interactions with other policy areas. The close link between resource conservation and climate protection is one example. To this end, the German Environment Agency is currently examining how a Germany that is largely greenhouse gas-neutral and at the same time resource-efficient might look like by the year 2050 - and what pathways need to be followed.

Results from the first scenario calculations show that both an energy turnaround and a resource turnaround in Germany are possible at the same time. We can reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Germany by the year 2050 by



ninety-five percent compared to 1990. At the same time, raw material consumption can be reduced by sixty percent. This shows that ambitious and networked climate and resource protection are mutually supportive. Both goals can and need to be achieved together. There are further important research questions. We need to examine what impacts such a transformation may possibly cause beyond our borders. And we should altogether find answers to the question of how we can advance climate and resource protection at international level in parallel.

We will have the opportunity to discuss some of these aspects this afternoon.

I look forward to stimulating presentations and interesting discussions. And please let me take this opportunity to announce that for the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of February 2019, the German Environment Agency invites you all to an international conference on raw materials here in Berlin.

By the way, this year the European Resources Forum is almost climate-neutral since we compensate CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. This includes the delegates' travel to and from

Berlin. You can find further information about our sustainable event concept in the conference app – another first time improvement this year.

As you can see, digitalization is not just a topic at our conference but also has its place in practice. We are transmitting the conference for the first time live online.

Finally, I would like to thank all those who have assisted in preparing this conference and all the speakers who with their presentations today and tomorrow will make important contributions. And thank you, dear delegates, for coming to Berlin for the fourth European Resources Forum. I wish us all an interesting and successful conference.