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Joint press release with the Federal Ministry for Environment (BMU)

Climate change and Germany – Adaptation necessary

Results of congress held in Berlin

Climate change has already posed tangible risks, damages and consequences that stand to become more pronounced in future. “We must develop intelligent adaptation measures and implement them in order to avoid future harm occurring to the national economy”, said Minister of Environment Sigmar Gabriel at a congress ending on 16 April in Berlin. The Federal Ministry for Environment is charged by the German Federal Government to promote cooperation with the Laender to develop a German strategy of adaptation to climate change. Efforts are aimed at creating a conceptual framework for action whereby risks to the population, businesses and municipalities are prevented. A draft proposal and initial set of measures are to be submitted by the end of 2008.

In addition to the possible harm done to the national economy and individuals, public officials at all levels must consider the impact on ecosystems and natural habitats. The resulting framework for real adaptation measures would be particularly suitable for implementation at the local and regional levels. The two-day congress demonstrated that an adaptation strategy must be part of a long-term gradual process which is both prioritised and flexible enough to react to new knowledge about global warming and any changed requirements and options in how to adapt.

The experts named 21 sensitive concerned action areas, including water balance and water management, protection of coastal areas, agriculture, forestry management, energy management, transport infrastructure, public health, protection of the population and against natural disasters, biological diversity, and spatial planning. The experts asked the federal government to aid in setting up effective and stakeholder-specific systems of information and communication, to introduce risk management, and to step up research, education, and vocational training. Cooperation in international development work must also be increased. The adaptation strategy is meant to aid regions in developing their own adapted risk analyses and action programmes.

The gathered professionals spoke out strongly in favour of making meaningful connections between current strategies relating to climate change, biodiversity, demographic change, economic use of land, avoidance of traffic, and sustainable development. They believe it is necessary that responsibilities be clearly allocated, that public and scientific institutions and organisations be more strongly networked, cross-disciplinary work be stepped up, and are also calling for a greater sense of personal responsibility. "We must take the effects on climate into account in all our economic and social activities. By this we mean the individual citizen as well as big business and the state", said Prof. Dr. Andreas Troge, President of the Federal Environment Agency.

Materials on the workshop and background information is on the Internet at www.wasklim.de or www.anpassung.net.

Dessau-Roßlau, 18 April 2008