

[Salutation]

On behalf of the Bertelsmann Stiftung I would like to extend a warm welcome to you all for the presentation of the second Reinhard Mohn Prize. Yann Arthus-Bertrand, the renowned French filmmaker and friend of our honoree, has put together a remarkable film for the presentation ceremony. This film has a clear message: we have major challenges ahead of us.

Challenges which we have to face up to – but which can also offer so much! What is at stake?

First: we must always act with the long-term view in mind. We must consider what our actions mean for future generations. Second: we have to acknowledge that we are part of a globalized world. So we need to ensure people all over the world have fair opportunities for development. Third: we need a holistic understanding of progress. We need strategies that guarantee a foundation of economic performance and political stability, while at the same time providing robust social and environmental systems. If we think about sustainability in this context, it becomes a living term.

And so the maxim we consciously adopted for the second Reinhard Mohn Prize is “Winning Strategies for a Sustainable Future.” With the presentation of the prize today, we honor an exceptional champion of sustainable models of progress. And so we are proud and delighted to present the Reinhard Mohn Prize to Kofi Annan. His commitment is proof that sustainability is achievable and that we as a global community can change things.

Many of today’s global, national and local initiatives benefit from structures which Kofi Annan established in his time as Secretary-General of the United Nations. Current discussions are considering the ongoing progress of the “Millennium Development Goals,” which Kofi Annan launched more than ten years ago. This instrument, which remains innovative and above all effective, has been the driver of many positive changes. The proportion of people who live in extreme poverty has been halved. The same goes for the mortality rate of children under five years of age. The list goes on.

But the Millennium Development Goals have also completely transformed the way that we approach issues. Countries are committing to concrete development goals. Transparency in dealing with the public has become a given in many parts of the world, so too cooperation between politics, business and society.

Alongside global initiatives it all comes down to how individual countries shape change. And so we conducted worldwide research which provided some highly illuminating results. Places such as Bhutan, Costa Rica, Finland, Ghana and Tasmania may seem distant to us, but in each of them we found approaches and solutions from which we can all learn. And more than that– we found crucial factors for success:

A country needs – first of all – a strong mission statement with a holistic conception of progress. A country needs – secondly – good institutions. A country needs – thirdly – the courage to be a pioneer and to create pilot projects. A country needs – fourthly – intelligent leadership which is prepared to involve citizens and interest groups in these projects.

Does Germany fulfill these criteria?

We need a strong mission statement for sustainability in Germany and a fresh conception of what progress means to us. With the Enquete (Enquiry) Commission entitled “Growth, Prosperity, Quality of Life,” which emerged out of the previous parliamentary term, Germany has taken a first step forward. However, the new Bundestag and the new government must press further still.

Do we have the right institutions and mechanisms to drive sustainability forward? Here, too, Germany has taken the right steps: the Council for Sustainable Development and the debt ceiling provided by the Basic Law, to name just two examples. But here, too, we are some distance from the goal. For example: a more effective assessment mechanism could prevent us from passing legislation which burdens future generations with additional debt.

Are we brave enough to be pioneers? With its energy transformation, Germany has launched a major project that establishes a healthy balance between economy and ecology. If this transition is successful, it could secure prosperity in Germany for decades. However, the energy transition is sure to fail if it isn’t balanced by a social component.

And then there is the issue of intelligent leadership. It is our hope that the Grand Coalition will create space for tackling important issues and not remain bogged down in trivialities. Facing the conversion to sustainable policies head on would be good for Germany and good for the world.

To return to my opening remarks: we have much to gain. One of the central concerns of our founder Reinhard Mohn were issues of capacity and durability in politics, business and society. He himself spoke of “ensuring continuity,” even of the “responsibility of continuity” in politics and business. In referring to the private sector he made it absolutely clear that “the task of ensuring continuity isn’t just a question of financing, but primarily of responsibility towards other people.”

As Reinhard Mohn so succinctly stated, people must be at the center of things. This is the core of any successful policy of sustainability. It’s not just our study which proves this, but also the honoree of this year’s Reinhard Mohn Prize. Kofi Annan embodies the vision of a system which puts people at its heart. And in the same spirit the Bertelsmann Stiftung, too, will carry on its commitment and drive the process of making politics more sustainable. We also want to help enable policy implementation and in the future we will also drive research, conduct model projects and provoke public debate. With this in mind, this ceremony is also an opening ceremony for us. Germany must have the courage for greater sustainability. Because sustainability is necessary – and it is achievable.

My warmest congratulations go to Kofi Annan, recipient of the Reinhard Mohn Prize for 2013. You, Kofi Annan, have shown us that with courage and intelligent leadership we can really make a difference and effect major change.

My warmest thanks to Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker, who will now present the ceremonial address for the presentation of the Reinhard Mohn Prize for 2013.