

Lived sustainability – lived humanity

Address by Luxembourg's Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker, on the occasion of the award of the Reinhard Mohn Prize to Kofi Annan on November 7, 2013

Distinguished Chairman of the Bertelsmann Stiftung, my good friend Aart,

Honorable Mrs. Mohn, my dear Liz,

Monsieur le Secrétaire général des Nations Unies, mon très cher Kofi,

Your excellencies the federal ministers,

Ladies and gentlemen, dear friends,

In preparing oneself to deliver an official address – this is true for virtually every speaker – one must first say that one is happy to be present. This generally isn't true. One says it anyway. Today I say it without reservation, because after a long absence I am truly happy to be in Gütersloh once again, because I know myself to be among friends here. One element of true friendship is sustainable friendship. And the friendship that binds my country with Bertelsmann and with this city is a prolonged, lasting and sustainable friendship, something for which I would also like to give thanks.

We are here in a city, in a place, where people are not simply inspired, but where people inspire others and where people shape the future. In so doing, they also shape sustainability, and above all, humanity. The day's theme is "Successful strategies for a sustainable future." That's all well and good. But better would be: "Immediate action today for a sustainable future," because I say with Erich Kästner, "There is no good unless one does it." Thus, we should do more good.

Because, my dear Liz, no other figure stands for good, sustainable action so completely as your late husband, Reinhard Mohn. As a businessman, this concept, this view of life, indeed this philosophy of existence brought him considerable success. But he was more than just one more businessman among many. His sense of corporate responsibility permeated his entire being, his entire work, his entire range of activity. And thus this company as well. He never gave top priority to the blind, unsustainable maximization of short-term economic success. No, he instead sought the maximization of humanity. In business, as a community of employees, but also the maximization of humanity from a local, municipal, regional, national, European and even global perspective. His maxim in this regard was always the same: "Humanity wins!" Economically sustainable and with an unlimited store of humanity.

Yes, humanity can win. A good example in this regard is this year's winner of the Reinhard Mohn Prize: the former U.N. Secretary-General, my friend Kofi Annan, is due this prize like no other. And I say this though I am also sometimes critical of the U.N. system, as they say. Because the U.N., along with all large associations, organizations and groups – including in particular the European Union – often drifts very far away from the people. Because it fails to hear peoples' fears, their worries and their distress, and does not take their hopes seriously. But you, my good friend Kofi, have as U.N. Secretary General sought to instill an understanding of how to reconcile the people and the organization. Initially, you tackled this in a tactfully African manner, with the quiet soft power of your very personal sustainability. Because in the end, sustainability is always a very personal thing – it is indeed primarily a personal thing.

In this regard, you have not only reconciled the aspirations and the reality of the United Nations, but as a moral head of the U.N., you have reconciled the U.N. with the nations, and thus with the true U.N. leaders, the people. In this way, you have reconciled it with itself. Today too, you work day after day in your Geneva-based Kofi Annan Foundation for your ideal of unbroken sustainability in a fragmented, globalized world. A world that daily cries out for more justice, for more sustainability, and thus more humanity. You've heard this silent scream since your youth in Ghana. Maybe Africans hear better than Americans and Europeans in this regard. Africans can listen carefully, Africans can listen closely, Africans have no need to listen from afar in order to understand what is going on.

You have heard this cry from below and given it a voice from above, your own voice – you have made your voice available to the world. And this voice remains audible today because for you it was always – even at the United Nations level – about unity in diversity. And you have also, always and principally, focused on the lives of local people. You recently opened a water treatment plant in Ghana, exhorting the people that, "This is your water." Yes, water: this means world and life, responsibility and future, hope and sustainability.

Without wishing to anticipate you, my dear Liz, I want to thank you, Kofi, in the name of the world community, for what you have done. Above all for the Millennium Goals initiated by you, which have become true milestones of sustainability. You have earned this prize, and I want to congratulate you warmly for it. We heads of state and government above all – particularly we in Europe – fail to hear the diverse, silent cries for help that reach us. As a rule, we do this unconsciously, because we are so in love with the lightness of being that we are no longer able to listen closely or accurately. But insofar as we do this unconsciously, we contribute to the lasting condition of unsustainability. It is this – this lightness of being, this failure to listen, this failure of vision – that we must change.

And in this respect, policy must take the lead and proceed with a good example in the area of sustainability. Policy is more than the casual management of the status quo. Policy is a

sustainable shaping of the future. It is clear that Europe must take a leading role in this sustainable shaping of the future. I will shortly leave my position as prime minister of Luxembourg, but will nonetheless continue to concern myself with Europe. This is why I continue to devote my full attention to the issue of global subsidiarity and solidarity. Who will do so, if not the Europeans? Who, if not the rich and sometimes very spoiled Europeans, can take on a pacemaking function in the area of sustainable global development.

How could we do this better, my dear friend Guido (Westerwelle), if we were to speak with one voice in the world? One seat on the U.N. Security Council is surely sufficient to frame European concerns correctly, and to make them evident to everyone. To be sure, this task is not absolutely pressing, as Luxembourg is non-permanent member of the Security Council as of the year 2013 – 2014. There is thus time to develop a single European voice. Yet we behave as though we already had this.

The principle of sustainability was – something few people know – first formulated in Germany. I don't mean here to make an academic digression into issues of sustainability research, but you should know that the concept was invented exactly three hundred years ago in Germany. The head of the Saxon mining authority in Freiberg, Carl von Carlowitz, rightly retains a hold on our memories. For, from the perspective of forestry, he spoke of a steady and sustainable use of the forest. Thus, the term appears for the first time in Saxony exactly three hundred years ago, a point in which, unjustly, the Saxons do not take enough pride. The fact that the term "sustainable" first appeared in connection with forestry is neither a trivial nor accidental occurrence. It is in fact both pathbreaking and forward-looking – in part because sustainability is in itself conceptually simple: Trees that are cut down must also be replanted. He who takes from nature, must also give back to nature. To say it with Francis Bacon: "We cannot command nature except by obeying her." Von Carlowitz thus teaches us to husband resources in harmony with nature, and consequently in harmony with ourselves.

But who are we really? The way we live in nature today is not sustainable. We have lost the sense of spontaneous sustainability. We certainly remain "social animals," to quote Aristotle, but we very often have lost the sense for community, and must learn anew this sense for greater community. We must learn, also in the sense of a new humanity, that sustainability has become an absolute requirement in our postmodern period of polycrisis. French sociologist Edgar Morin was in this sense correct with his apodictic diagnosis: "The gigantic planetary crisis is nothing less than the crisis of a humanity that cannot achieve humanity." In times of food crisis and climate crisis, economic and financial crisis, ethical and identity crisis, one can also speak of a sustainability crisis of unlearned humanity.

Back to the harmony of resource economics. In this harmony, three elements resonate with one another: the economy, the environment and society – society in its social and political

extensions. Sustainable action takes place in the intersection of this triangle of sustainability, which we must render harmonious. Here at Bertelsmann, it is not difficult to begin with the sustainability of the economy. Because here business is regarded as having a holistic responsibility to the common welfare and the common environment. To speak in accord with Reinhard Mohn: "The economy is not just a system, but is rather dependent on those that live it, on those that take responsibility, on those that shape it." In this regard, an inquiry as to the purpose of the economy is inevitable. And this object is precisely people, is their community, their provisioning first and foremost with still too-scarce food.

Although initial progress in the fight against absolute poverty is evident, almost a billion people continue to suffer from malnutrition. And therefore, my dear Kofi, your dedication to drinking water and sustainable agriculture and your work against hunger moves me. Because for me and many more here, the ten thousand children a day who worldwide die from the most terrible of all deaths, that of starvation, simply cannot be accepted. We are too rich not to see what is happening on other continents. And it is a great shame that many European countries are revising their development aid downward, rather than maximizing it upward.

We quickly forget that agriculture is in fact more important than many other sectors of our common economic activity. We cannot remedy the catastrophe of world hunger with the resources of the financial industry. Agriculture remains important. The financial industry often turns inward, losing itself in its own universe. The crisis, the economic and financial crisis that is not yet behind us, which we are still passing through, is the result of the betrayal of the cardinal virtues of the social market economy. The love of money should not be the precept guiding action; rather, the overall orientation to community welfare is the maxim for economic activity.

You see, years ago there was a German bank, a Deutsche Bank – I believe it was called that too – that ran advertisements reading: "Let your money work for itself overnight." No, one must oneself work to achieve a sustainable prosperity, not let money do the work. This raises the question of maximum economic growth, and this question arises always in connection with the issues of profit maximization and the balance of power. It is precisely here that sustainable policy must advance, and provide for a new paradigm of sufficiency and the sustainable distributional balance – economically, societally, politically. A world in which 80 percent of global wealth is possessed by just a quarter of humanity cannot grow sustainably. Sustainability also means equitable ownership and participation in the world's wealth.

But above all, growth – as I have said – must serve the common good, and above all create jobs, strengthen job security, and provide for more wealth, and not simply pursue quick market gains or profit. Therefore, the best form of human communal life is in all respects the ecological social market economy, with the primacy of human labor over capital. In this city, speaking at Bertelsmann, and in the home country of Ludwig Erhard, I have little need to justify this

concept's ability to produce success. But freedom and justice breathe together. None other than Amartya Sen, a figure much appreciated by Kofi Annan, has pointed out with his whole sustainability economics that freedom and justice are ultimately two sides of the same ecological-social sustainability coin. In the fields of environmental and climate protection, we find it difficult to achieve the goals we have set for ourselves as a community of nations. But climate expert Ross Gelbspan once put it this way: "Climate change is not an environmental problem. It is a civilization problem." Sen too speaks of the threatened environmental opportunities for the people, for all people.

Because none of us – not in Africa, not in Asia, not here – will be able to escape the consequences of climate change. It is therefore useful to refer to the 1987 Brundtland Report, in which the former Norwegian prime minister defined sustainability as follows: "Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs." This applies to all countries, including the emerging and developing countries. Yet strictly speaking, Brundtland did not define sustainability, but rather made sustainability a goal for the coming decades. Because sustainability has a direct, and indeed the most intimate connection with the intergenerational contract, with intergenerational equity and with intergenerational responsibility.

Justice, which in times of globalization can only be conceived globally, brings me to the third area of the triangle, to society, to the state, to the nation, to the community, to civil society, to politics, to Europe and also even to the United Nations. And in a new world in which the individual person knows an unprecedented power, it brings me also back to the individual. Never before have individual people had as much power as today. Kofi has shown this in his work and actions in New York and elsewhere in the world. Mr. Snowden also shows how much power an individual can have. But never has power been more diffuse than it is today. This diffusion in power involves considerable risk. Above all, however, it offers the great opportunity of a transnational network of people in a multipolar world. Only open nations can breathe this new spirit of sustainability. The old, defensive nations, limiting themselves with their own absolute sovereignty, will have no chance in the world of tomorrow. And the world of tomorrow will not be like the world in which we live and move. We already know today that we will soon have to feed 7.1 billion people on our planet. There will be more. This will rise to 10 or 11 billion people by the end of this century, exactly 4 percent of which will be Europeans. Four percent Europeans among 11 billion people. We, who still think we would be masters of the world. The world needs no masters! And we also need not to want this. We are not this in any case. At the beginning of the 20th century, our planet's population was made up of 20 percent Europeans. At the end of this century there will be only 4 percent, among 11 billion people. Whosoever then draws the conclusion that the moment has come in which we can develop back along our national, petty divisions, instead of doing more for European integration, and

doing more to be listened to in the world – that person is fundamentally mistaken. The future belongs to Europe!

And if we want to cope with the issue of out-of-control demography, then we need greater educational and training efforts throughout the world. Kofi has said that education would be the decisive bridge into the future, and it is. Sustainability, as I have tried to show, is not primarily environmental, but is rather primarily a principle of human activity, and in the sense of sustainable development, also a process of action. In this regard, the first basis for sustainable action is not nature. It is man. It is we ourselves. The most beautiful and best definition of sustainability and sustainable development brings us no further if we also fail to implement sustainability politically, economically, societally and, not least, personally. Therefore we must turn theories into visions, concepts into programs, and explanations into actions, and must finally take action. And once again: Europe must progress in this process.

"Lived Humanity" was the title of the last volume of Swiss global ethicist Hans Küng's recently published memoir. Here, the dialogue of religions and the dialogue of cultures naturally play a prominent role. And indeed, sustainability is a civilization-wide project for this century. In concluding my talk on sustainability, I would like to come back to the people, the focal point and fulcrum of all creative sustainable work. In order that we may live sustainably, in order that we can survive, we must rediscover the human in ourselves and in those with whom we interact. In this way, a lived sustainability would become a lived freedom, a lived responsibility, a lived justice, a lived community, a lived humanity, and not least also a lived hope for a better common future.

There is a beautiful saying in Africa – in Africa, there are so very many – that runs: "The best time to plant a tree was twenty years ago. The next best time is now."

I thank you for your attention!