

Introducing Germany and India – Drivers for a Sustainable Future

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Introduction

Sustainability is a guiding principle in German politics and I believe more-and-more also in Indian politics. Advanced, dynamic and developed economies in particular must take decisions that are sustainable in economic, environmental and social terms if our vital natural resources, e.g. energy and land use, the two topics of this conference are to be preserved. Sustainability means ensuring equity between generations, quality of life, social cohesion and international responsibility. Present and future challenges are so ambitious that they can only be mastered with new technologies and findings and with new concepts for decision-making. I am confident that Germany and India – by joining expertise in Science and Technology – can make a substantial contribution towards generating sustainable solutions.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) and the Department of Science and Technology (DST), Government of India emphasized the prominent role which research and development play in sustainable development and have confirmed their support for the development of an internationally coordinated research agenda as part of the Heiligendamm dialogue process as requested by the G8+5 in 2007.

Dialogue on Science for Sustainability (D4S)

Internationally coordinated research agendas are a must when it comes to finding sustainable solutions to the global challenges of our time. For this reason, the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) has launched a series of dialogues on Science for Sustainability with key emerging economies, i.e. India, Brazil, China, Russia, and South Africa. Bilateral events are being held under the slogan “Sustainable Solutions – Science for Sustainability”. The objective is to establish the foundations for long-term, strategic partnerships in sustainability research and increase bilateral cooperation in sustainability related research and development projects and dissemination of results. In the long term, global challenges need to be tackled by setting a global agenda for research cooperation to find sustainable solutions.

The 2nd German-Indian Conference on Research for Sustainability marks the continuation of the German-Indian Dialogue on Science for Sustainability (for short “D4S”) which was recently launched by Federal Minister Dr. Annette Schavan (BMBF) and Shri Kapil Sibal, Minister for Science and Technology and Earth Sciences of the Government of India by signing a Joint declaration of Intent and holding the 1st German-Indian Conference on Research for Sustainability in New Delhi, 9th September 2008.

Science and technology play a key role in meeting the global challenges of sustainable development and resource efficiency. Having recognized the considerable potential for collaboration in developing cost-effective and innovative technologies between Germany and India, the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) of Germany and the Department of Science and Technology (DST) of the Government of India are convening now the second conference on Science for Sustainability. The conference is being held in the “United Nations” City of Bonn today and tomorrow, as a side event to the Open Meeting 2009 of the International Human Dimensions Programme on Global Environmental Change (IHDP). Most of us attended the IHDP opening session this morning. Both events deal with “Sustainability” – the IHDP meeting focused more on the “Human Dimension” and our conference here focuses more on the research aspect.

This morning BMBF State Secretary Prof. Meyer-Krahmer in his key note during the opening of the IHDP meeting stressed on three key issues:

In order to find sustainable solutions to global challenges besides of new technologies we need to include social sciences and the humanities as well. This will also include impulses for a more efficient and sustainable technology transfer. Future research has to be organised more than in the past in inter- and trans-disciplinary and international collaboration. BMBF strongly supports this approach.

The 2nd German-Indian Conference on Research for Sustainability will deal with the question of what sustainable solutions science and research have to offer respectively need to be addressed in future in response to global challenges especially in the fields of “land use” and “energy”. Some 60 stakeholders from government, public and private institutions have come together here to discuss today and tomorrow the central question of how research and technological development can effectively contribute to enduring, socially equitable and ecologically sustainable economic development.

The goal of the second conference is to define common areas between India and Germany in the field of “energy” and “land use” research and development and to build future networks between the scientists in both countries. These are expected to contribute to the planning of bilateral and international research related to sustainability and ecological innovation and to generate research, development and innovation alliances for the better use of scientific and technological knowledge. It is planned to continue this dialogue early next year with another bilateral conference focused on “water” and “waste management” research.

Envisaged Outcomes

The envisaged outcomes of this meeting are:

- 1st Engaging in a dialogue on key issues related to the thematic foci of the conference: Energy and Land Use research and development
- 2nd The identification of specific areas for enhanced research cooperation between the two countries
- 3rd The initiation of discussion of concrete Indo-German research and development project proposals

BMBF and DST have a very strong cooperation in Science and Technology since 1974. The recommendations generated from this meeting will be provided as guiding input to the Joint Working Group on “Science for Sustainability” under the Indo-German Joint Committee for Science and Technology for directing future joint activities including funding for “Science for Sustainability”-R&D projects, e.g. under the Indo-German Science and Technology Centre programme, which is open for so called “2+2 R&D projects”. My colleague Dr. Stienen will provide more details on BMBF/DST S&T funding programmes later.

A word of thanks

I thank the organizers: first of all United Nations University – Vice Rectorate in Europe, Prof. Janos Bogardi and his team and second the International Bureau of the BMBF and last but not least the Department of Science and Technology (DST) for their effort in bringing us here together. I thank all of you for coming and wish you a successful 2nd conference and fruitful discussions on Research for Sustainability.