

Wind energy development in Europe

A contribution to climate protection

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Anlass: Welcome address at the European Wind Energy Conference
London, 22 November 2004

Secretary of State Patricia Hewitt,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Let me start by expressing my sincere thanks to the European Wind Energy Association for their continuous commitment.

The European Wind Energy Conference is not only a forum on wind energy use and technology, it is also a welcome opportunity for the sector to present itself. I am convinced that this Conference will provide important impetus for research and development of wind energy technology, both in terms of policy and for the industry itself.

In Europe we do indeed have much to offer in the field of wind energy: more than 2/3 of the world's installed capacity is in Europe, 90% of the wind power capacity sold worldwide is produced in Europe, 9 out of 10 major wind energy manufacturers are based in Europe. Moreover, we benefit from the strong growth rate of around 30% a year in the wind energy sector.

And there are economic implications: At the beginning of June the price of crude oil rose unexpectedly to \$35 a barrel. At the time this was a shock. Today - with the price at around \$ 47 per barrel - many companies and economies would now wish a return to that position.

We all agree that the Kyoto Protocol is the necessary prerequisite for global climate protection. The Kyoto process will be a further boost to the increased use of renewable energies in North and South. Emissions trading and the clean development mechanism will increase the demand for renewable energies and provide an impetus to wind energy expansion. Now, climate protection must be given a long-term perspective. We need new greenhouse gas mitigation targets up to 2030. Germany has proposed that the European Union commits itself to reducing its greenhouse gas emissions by at least 30 % by 2020.

Undoubtedly, the recent decision of Russia to ratify the Kyoto Protocol must be considered a breakthrough for international climate protection. For the first time, there is an internationally binding ceiling on the emission of greenhouse gases.

To support the increased use of renewables in North and South, the German Government hosted renewables 2004 in June this year. China recently declared its willingness to host a follow-up conference. At renewables 2004 in Bonn, 3000 participants from 154 countries adopted a political declaration. They shared the vision of renewable energies becoming a most important widely available source of energy.

In order to create access to renewables, an action programme was adopted which

summarises 200 commitments and actions by governments, international financial institutions, private business and civil society, aimed at increasing the use of renewable energies. If all these measures are fully implemented, the International Action Programme alone will enable 1.2 billion t CO₂ to be avoided in 2015.

Furthermore, the participants of renewables 2004 agreed to create a new global policy network which will push for international policies to promote renewable energies. The wind energy industry is invited - and I hope it will fulfil expectations - to become a strong voice in this network.

Let me revert to the economics of renewable energies: The rapid increase in the use of wind energy has major advantages. It is a classic win-win option. Wind energy is one of the most dynamic and innovative growth markets. It also offers "old economy" sectors such as the steel and construction industry major opportunities.

Renewable energies make countries less dependent on oil imports and create supply security. The crude oil price more than doubled this year, rising from \$25 to over \$50 per barrel. Today, wind energy can already compete with fossil fuels. In Germany 50,000 people currently work in the wind energy sector. Overall, the renewables sector in Germany employs more than 120,000 people. Turnover of all branches of renewable energies now amounts to around € 10 billion.

To sum up: Wind energy is no longer a niche energy. Wind energy is a pillar of a modern energy policy. In Germany we recognised the potential of wind energy utilisation early on, and seized the opportunity to benefit from it. This strategy is now having an effect.

Today, renewable energies contribute around 10% of electricity consumption - over two and a half times more than five years ago. We will now start utilising offshore wind energy and aim to achieve 3,000 MW offshore by 2010.

We owe this rapid development primarily to the Renewable Energy Sources Act (EEG): It guarantees for 20 years a specified minimum fee for electricity from renewable energies. It commits grid operators to the priority purchase of electricity from renewables and the costs of the higher feed-in rates are shared among electricity consumers. The costs for an average family are around one euro per month.

The EU set out the goals in its Directive on increasing the use renewable energies. By 2010 the share of renewables in electricity consumption in the enlarged EU (EU-25) will be 21 %. We must even exceed this goal: Europe must remain a pioneer in renewable energies, and set more far-reaching targets for 2020 - as called for by the Council and the Commission.

I am delighted that Great Britain has also set itself ambitious goals for climate protection and the expansion of renewable energies. In renewable energies research, too, Great Britain is creating powerful momentum. The expansion of offshore wind energy is taking shape very successfully in Great Britain, on account of the excellent natural potential. Great Britain and Germany are setting a positive example here, and can look back on a good cooperation.

In climate protection Great Britain and Germany pull together. We have both shown in our national policies that climate protection is possible. With a reduction of 111 million tonnes of

greenhouse gases compared to 1990, Great Britain has already achieved its reduction goal. Germany is already close to its 21% target, with a reduction of 237 million tonnes.

Both countries have thus substantially contributed to the fact that EU greenhouse gas emissions are now almost 3% lower than in 1990. And there are other signs at European level: The declaration adopted at the Offshore Policy Workshop in Egmont at the end of October 2004 shows that many Member States in Europe are very interested in offshore wind energy and actively support it.

Our joint commitment demonstrates that climate protection is affordable and even economically beneficial. Between 1990 and 2002, Great Britain reduced its greenhouse gas emissions by almost 15% - in the same period, its economy grew by 30%. This shows that a consistent climate protection policy makes it possible to decouple economic growth and environmental consumption.

I am sure that the European Wind Energy Conference will establish itself as a forum for the wind energy sector, serving climate protection, the increased use of renewable energies and especially the promotion of wind energy. Let us focus our efforts and use the potential and opportunities to the best possible effect.

Weitere Informationen: [Pressemitteilung vom 22. November 2004](#)