

ES GILT DAS GESPROCHENE WORT

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to our joint side event in my capacity as Mayor of Bonn, Germany's United Nations City, and President of ICLEI - Local Governments for Sustainability. This 25th Conference of the Parties here in Madrid is a crossroads – and hopefully a turning point. Over the past year, we have seen the urgent need for climate action take center stage. It is not cities or governments the world has to give thanks to. It is the young generation, our children, who are taking to the streets and demanding climate justice. Yes, we are in the midst of a climate crisis. More than 1000 cities worldwide have already declared a climate emergency.

The sooner we acknowledge this and act accordingly, the better our chances are for future life on earth. In my home town Bonn we have embarked on this journey. Early this year we adopted our first Sustainability Strategy that is based on the Agenda 2030. This was followed by the declaration of Climate Emergency in July and the decision to become climate neutral by 2035 at the latest.

We have joined the Covenant of Mayors for Climate and Energy and are just about to release our new mission statement for climate mitigation and adaptation that envisions climate neutrality by 2035.

My administration is currently putting together measures to enhance climate action that will be presented to the City Council shortly.

So we may well serve as an example of how coordinated strategy, public engagement, vision and skills can work together – and to show that a symbolic declaration can drive real action on the path towards climate neutrality. There are thousands of fine examples of cities around the globe following this path. Take Recife – Mayor Julio is here - first city in Brazil to declare a climate emergency. Take Darebin, the Australian city chairing ICLEI Oceania that started this story in 2016. Or Turku: aiming to be climate neutral in 2029, before Finland’s national target.

Close to 300 ICLEI-cities have set their path towards Climate Neutrality by now, planning to get there by 2050. They have committed to go for 100 percent renewables, to divest from fossil fuels. ICLEI stands ready to bring them into the Climate Ambition Alliance of the COP25 Presidency.

While we seize the momentum created by our young citizens to drive climate action, steered by our political leaders, I would like to highlight a key to success. This key is vertically integrated, well-funded, systemic and strategic action involving all parts of the puzzle – an integrated approach to include different levels of government, key stakeholders, and of course, our citizens. Pursuing a climate action plan needs this framework. And therefore cities need to be fully integrated in all strategic, financial and implementation processes when it comes to climate change.

Cities all over the world understand the message. This creates a powerful momentum! Let us turn it into sustainable climate action taking us as soon as possible to climate neutrality and the achievement of the SDGs during the next decade.

ICLEI has started its own decade, connecting the dots, called Urban Era 4 Life. And I am particularly happy to work with the UNFCCC and the Federal Government of Germany on this initiative. Because the key words of everything we do in the next years are urban and life. This century, this world is urban, whether we like it or not. The migration into cities is unbroken.

Achieving the 2030 Agenda means delivering on sustainable urban development. Leaving no one behind is a core responsibility of cities – and it means saving lives.

We're in this together – thank you for complementing our action with your contribution!