

"Sustainable Bioenergy - Challenges and Opportunities"
International Conference, 12 - 13 October 2006

Welcome by Jürgen Maier

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Ladies and gentlemen, good morning

My name is Jürgen Maier. On behalf of the German NGO Forum Environment & development I would like to welcome you to Bonn, to our conference Sustainable Bioenergy – Challenges and Opportunities. This conference, **jointly convened** by the UNF and the FUE tries to **chart new ground** by bringing together representatives and experts from fairly **different** backgrounds – from NGOs, business, governments and science as well as international organisations, to discuss how bioenergy can be utilized in a **sustainable** way. There are **many** conferences and meetings where NGOs discuss this among themselves, or business or scientists or government officials do the same among **themselves**. However, we believe there is a lot of **common ground** on the need for making bioenergy a truly sustainable form of energy, and we also believe that the differences of opinions that do exist are squarely **through** these various stakeholder groups and are not necessarily **between** these groups.

Why is this dialogue so **important**? We are living in a truly **fascinating** time. The energy paradigm of the 20th century has reached its **limits**, the world is exploring **new** energy paradigms. **Bioenergy** will definitely play a very important role in all possible energy scenarios for the future. At the same time, many people also believe that large-scale utilization of bioenergy has the potential to do **serious damage** to ecosystems and livelihoods.

There are many questions both for the **proponents** and the **critics** of bioenergy, questions that have to be taken seriously and often do not have easy answers.

- Who will **benefit** from large scale bioenergy utilization – agrobusiness multinationals or small-scale farmers – or maybe even both?
- If bioenergy is a way out of our addiction to fossil fuels, how can we **avoid** that it will cause other very serious environmental problems such as deforestation?

- Is there **enough land** for growing food, energy plants **and** for natural ecosystems?

Just to name a **few** of these questions.

Whatever the answers are – one thing is in my view certain. **Many** industries have made the mistake of ignoring their critics too long, **until** they could no longer **afford** it. Trial and error, if you wish. The bioenergy sector will only be able to grow to its full potential if it takes the problems seriously and addresses them. At the same time, **any** energy scenario **beyond** fossil fuels will rely to a considerable extent on bioenergy. The case for a **sustainable** bioenergy strategy is **compelling**, and I believe we can **neither** afford scenarios **without** bioenergy nor with large-scale **unsustainable** bioenergy. I hope you will find this conference useful for **you** and the people you are working with, and I am looking forward to two **exciting** days with you. Thank you.