

Informationsservice Federal City of Bonn

The United Nations in Bonn – For Sustainable Development Worldwide

Bonn has managed over the past decade to shape for itself a new profile as the German City of the United Nations and a centre of international dialogue on key issues of the future. The Bonn UN Campus is a visible symbol of this development. Since July 1996, Bonn is entitled to call itself a UN City. Ten years later, in July 2006, Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel was able to hand the new branch office of the United Nations over to UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. The Federal Government had invested EUR 55 million into refurbishing the high-rise building which used to accommodate MP offices and is widely known by its nickname “Tall Eugene” (after the first name of a former President of Parliament). Almost all UN units residing in Bonn are assembled under its roof. The other, older MP office building is being rebuilt as an ecological pilot project to serve as the future seat of the UN Climate Secretariat (UNFCCC).

“The UN in Bonn – for sustainable development worldwide”: this is the common denominator of the UN units in Bonn. They are:

- the United Nations Volunteers Program (UNV)
- the Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- the Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD)
- the Secretariat of the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species (UNEP/CMS)
- Das Sekretariat des Abkommens zur Erhaltung der afrikanisch-eurasischen wandernden Wasservögel – Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of African-Eurasian Migratory Waterbirds (UNEP/AEWA)
- Das Sekretariat des Übereinkommens zur Erhaltung der Kleinwale in der Nord- und Ostsee – Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Small Cetaceans of the Baltic and North Seas (ASCOBANS)
- Das Sekretariat des Abkommens zur Erhaltung der europäischen Fledermauspopulationen – Secretariat of the Agreement on the Conservation of Populations of European Bats (EUROBATS)
- the Regional Information Center of the United Nations in Europe - Liaison office in Germany (UNRIC)
- the UNESCO International Center for Technical and Vocational Education and Training (UNESCO/UNEVOC)
- the European Center for Environment and Health of the World Health Organisation (WHO-ECEH)
- the Institute for Environment and Human Security of the United Nations University (UNU/EHS) and the UNU Vice Rectorate in Europe (UNU-ViE)

- the Platform for the Promotion of Early Warning of the United Nations Secretariat for the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UN/ISDR-PPEW)
- UNWTO-Consulting Unit on Biodiversity and Tourism für Tsunami Affected Countries
- International Human Dimensions Programm on Global Environmental Change (UN-IHDP)
- United Nations Platform for Space-based Information for Disaster Management and Emergency Response (UN-SPIDER).

The UN Campus provides to all of them ideal working conditions and an environment rich in synergies. A special advantage is the close neighbourhood to the World Conference Center Bonn whose considerable extension will be completed by mid 2009, and to many other important partners. This is an excellent environment for co-operative action and for short-cut contacts. UN organisations, Federal Ministries and Federal Agencies, about 150 Non-Governmental Organisations, Research Institutions and the resident economic Global Players determine the character of Bonn as an international location. Increasingly, the city is turning into a hub of a network whose actors focus on the issues of sustainable and humane development.

Conference activities in Bonn are equally geared towards themes of global sustainability. The German United Nations City provides new platforms to constructive dialogue on the national, international and supranational levels. Time and again, fresh momentum goes out from Bonn and its actors on the road towards worldwide sustainable development. Whether climate, desertification, water, soil, biodiversity, or early warning – Bonn has developed into the German competence centre for environment, development and health. This synergy network of sustainability is reinforced by numerous partners from the areas of politics, organisations, industry, science, culture and NGOs of international scope. Among the latter are not only German organisations with international activities or dealing with international issues but also approximately 20 international Non-Governmental Organisations which have established their headquarters in Bonn since 1990. A few examples:

- The Bonn International Center for Conversion (BICC) commits itself worldwide to the conversion of resources formerly used for military ends into resources for civil purposes, performing vital work in areas of crisis.
- The International Paralympic Committee (IPC) has been co-ordinating the Paralympics, the Olympic Games for disabled persons, from Bonn since autumn 1999.
- Fair Trade Labelling Organisations International (FLO) co-ordinates and supports the work of the national Transfair Organisations
- The Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) is an international NGO striving for worldwide sustainable forest management by means of forest certification on the basis of comparable standards

As a conference location Bonn was able to prove its competence many times. To cite a few examples: the Conferences of the Parties to UN Conventions such as the Climate Summits in 1999 and 2001, the Petersberg Afghanistan Talks, the International Conference on Fresh Water in 2001, the International Conference on Renewable Energies in 2004 and recently the International Early Warning Conference in 2006.

So Bonn´s central theme is sustainability – and the City practices what it preaches. It joined the city network ICLEI and the Climate Alliance of Cities. In addition, the Lady Mayor of Bonn was elected Chairperson of the World Council of Mayors on Climate Change in late 2005.

The city has developed a concept of international co-operation and maintains sustainability oriented project partnerships in addition to traditional city twinning, among others with Minsk (Republic of Belarus), Ulan Baatar (Mongolia), Bukhara (Usbekistan), La Paz (Bolivia) and Chengdu (China). Due to acquired competence and to successful networking, Bonn was able several times to organize, in co-operation with other partners (eg. ICLEI, InWEnt), to organize international local government pre-conferences on the eve of big international conferences, up to now on the issues of desertification, renewable energies and, most recently, early warning. Such a pre-conference will also take place during the 9. Conference of the Parties of the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) in May 2008 as it has become increasingly evident that the approach and the experience of local governments are able to add substantial elements to the international debate.

So Bonn does not only hold the role of an international location but is itself an actor for sustainability.

The foundations for today's international profile of Bonn were laid in the Berlin-Bonn Act of April 26, 1994, which stipulates as a central task to develop Bonn into a centre of development policy and a location for national, international and supranational organisations. This German location of international relations was enhanced by the transfer from Berlin to Bonn of important organisations of development policy such as InWEnt, the German Development Service (DED) and the German Institute for Development Policy (DIE). In addition, the GTZ (Organisation for Technical Co-operation) opened an office in Bonn. Together with the approximately 150 governmental, semi-governmental, church and private organisations, this resulted in yet another enhancement of this central theme. Worldwide contacts on issues of the environment and of development co-operation are equally maintained by working-groups dealing with these topics and by industrial associations.

There are, moreover, organisations of research and science as well as scientific institutions entertaining an intensive international exchange such as the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft (DFG – German Research Council), Hochschulrektorenkonferenz (HRK – Association of Directors and Presidents of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions), Deutscher Akademischer Austauschdienst (DAAD – German Academic Exchange Service) and the Alexander-von-Humboldt Foundation (AvH).

The Compensation Agreement also enhanced the field of science and added international accents. The foundation at the University of Bonn of the Centre of Development Research (Zentrum für Entwicklungsforschung – ZEF) and the Centre of European Integration Studies (Zentrum für Europäische Integrationsforschung – ZEI) was sponsored by funds from the Compensation Agreement). The ZEF above all entertains a close co-operation with development organisations, building a bridge between science and practical experience. The Center of Advanced European Studies and Research (CAESAR), also funded by the Berlin-Bonn Compensation Agreement and organised as a private foundation, brings international teams of researchers together for a given period of time to do basic and application-oriented research.

So Bonn as an international location and platform of international dialogue is not a meaningless concept. Bonn makes active use of its opportunity to become the German Competence Centre for issues that will determine our future, and to bring together many partners of international scope to that end.

03/2008