

Welcome Speech

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Welcome Speech to the Participants of the 15th International Conference on Sustainable Development

Ladies and Gentlemen, Distinguished Guests, Esteemed Colleagues, and Friends,

It is with great pleasure and honor that I welcome you all today to Göttingen for the 15th International Conference on Sustainable Development under the Title “Challenges, Perspectives and Policies in the Area of Sustainable Development, Food Security, Environment Health and Climate Change (2025/2050), organized by Afrikanisch-Asiatische Studienförderung e.V. (AASF) founded in 1959 and its suborganization, the International Foundation for Sustainable Development in Africa (IFSDAA) in collaboration with HAWK University of Applied Sciences and Arts in Göttingen and The Society for Sustainable Agriculture and Resource Management in Hisar.

I am delighted to see so many committed individuals gathered here, each one of you dedicated to addressing the critical issues our world faces, from climate change to sustainable development.

I would like to extend a special welcome to our distinguished guests, whose presence today enriches this important gathering. It is also my privilege to recognize the immense contributions of Professor Rishi Behl, who has been a driving force behind this conference and many others before it. Although Professor Behl could not join us due to health reasons, we send our warmest thoughts for his swift recovery and extend our deepest gratitude for his tireless efforts.

Welcome to Göttingen, a city with a rich tradition of academic excellence and international cooperation. Known for its prestigious university, founded in 1737, Göttingen has been home to numerous Nobel laureates and remains a hub for scientific and intellectual exchange. It is fitting that we meet here to discuss such critical global issues, as the spirit of collaboration and innovation that Göttingen embodies will surely inspire our discussions throughout the conference.

The Urgency of Climate Change

The focus of this conference is clear. Climate change is no longer a distant issue. It is here, and its impacts are being felt globally. From devastating wildfires in California and Australia to the recent floods that have displaced millions in Pakistan, no region is untouched by its effects. We are also witnessing rising sea levels, more severe droughts and water scarcity, and the alarming rate of biodiversity loss. These are not just statistics; they represent real people, real lives, and ecosystems that are at risk. From the impact of climate change vulnerable populations are affected, particularly in coastal areas, also endangering food production, all factors essential for sustaining human life.

Yet, as overwhelming as these challenges may seem, there is reason for hope.

Positive Developments

Globally, we are witnessing extraordinary efforts aimed at reversing these trends. Nations are coming together through international agreements such as the Paris Agreement, committing to substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions. The transition to renewable energy is gaining momentum, with countries like Germany and India setting ambitious targets for renewable energy generation.

Innovative technologies such as carbon capture, electric vehicles, and sustainable agriculture are being deployed on a massive scale, offering practical solutions to some of our most pressing problems. Reforestation initiatives, like the Great Green Wall in Africa, are restoring degraded ecosystems, creating livelihoods, and absorbing carbon from the atmosphere.

The Need for Peace in a World of Conflict

However, we cannot ignore the broader geopolitical challenges that exacerbate these environmental issues. The ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the tensions in Eastern Europe and the Middle East have caused immense human suffering and diverted global resources away from addressing urgent climate action and sustainable development.

It is in this context that we must remember the lessons of Mahatma Gandhi, whose legacy of peace and nonviolence is particularly poignant today. As we work towards sustainability, we must also work towards peace. Conflict hinders progress, deepens inequalities, and threatens the very future we are striving to protect.

Future Activities and the Role of AASF

Looking ahead, AASF is committed to expanding its activities to further our collective mission of sustainable development. Since 2007 we have conducted 25 international conferences. We plan to hold more international conferences and webinars, establish a Knowledge Center for sustainable projects, and serve as a Resource Center for policymakers. This includes building a comprehensive database, publishing newsletters, and producing books that will serve as critical tools for decision-makers, educators, and activists worldwide.

We invite all of you to be part of this growing movement. Your expertise, your ideas, and your collaboration are what will make these initiatives successful.

Wishing Success for the Conference

In closing, I would like to thank each and every one of you for your participation. I am confident that over the next few days, we will engage in fruitful discussions, form meaningful partnerships, and leave this conference with a renewed sense of purpose.

I wish all of you a successful and inspiring conference, and I look forward to the outcomes we will achieve together.

Thank you, and once again, welcome to Göttingen.