

Speech
by former Chancellor Gerhard Schröder
at the
Fourth Middle East and North Africa
Renewable Energy Conference (MENAREC 4)

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Damascus (Syria)

Ladies and Gentlemen!

Thank you very much for your friendly invitation. It is not just a pleasure, but also an honour for me, to participate in the fourth Middle East and North Africa Renewable Energy Conference.

By selecting „renewable energy“ as your topic, you have chosen to review one of the most central global challenges of the 21st century.

Energy systems based on renewable energy and continuously improving energy efficiency can best help all countries develop sustainably.

Development needs energy.

Sustainable development needs sustainable energy.

Without sustainable development we cannot achieve the development, that we need, in order for people to live in safety and justice.

This strategic approach is aimed at making the world economically more successful, more environmentally friendly, and, above all, socially just.

Ladies and gentlemen,

These tasks are affected by two major challenges: climate change and the increasing competition for fossil fuels.

Changes to our climate represent a huge threat, since the social and ecological impact they make, have the potential to disrupt geopolitical stability.

They also represent an economic threat, since the costs, resulting from environmental damage, are huge.

Therefore, we need an international accord, that goes above and beyond the Kyoto Protocol, to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and thus put the brakes on climate change.

First and foremost, we need a sustainable energy policy, which conserves natural resources and makes us less dependent on oil, gas and uranium.

That means, we need a strategy for saving energy and increasing electricity from renewables.

Germany is a technological leader in the efficient use of coal and gas for producing power. Over time, Germany has come to occupy the leading position alongside Japan in terms of energy productivity.

This also holds true, when it comes to expanding the use of renewables to generate electricity. A field in which Germany commands worldwide technological leadership.

Since 1998, Germany has more than doubled the share of total power consumption, accounted for by renewables.

By 2020, renewables may account for up to 25 percent of electricity consumed, with further potential to rise to 45 percent by 2030.

And renewables-based energy has increasingly become a key economic factor: in Germany, more than 200.000 people are employed in this sector.

However, whether countries such as China, India – or even the USA – chart a similar course is of crucial importance to the future of climate protection.

Only if we work together, will we stand a chance of slowing climate change and leaving future generations an environment that makes life worth living.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Over the past few years, the global framework of resource supplies has changed dramatically. This especially applies to the field of energy.

Firstly because there is huge demand from nations, who are pushing into world markets. And secondly, because some countries, that exported oil and gas, will soon reach the end of their reserves and become importers of energy.

In recent months we saw, how sensitively energy markets responded to changes in supply and demand.

That is why it is important, that we establish a clear strategy for bringing secure energy supplies into the global economy.

And for this, we need a multilateral approach. I do believe, that energy issues cannot be handled in a unilateral way. We all have to work together towards global energy security.

First and foremost, we need safe, reliable and politically stable energy-exporting nations. We must stabilise fragile regions and countries, that are threatened by disintegration.

This is necessary, both, to ensure reliable international raw materials supplies, and to make sure, that exporting countries and their populations profit from the wealth, generated by selling energy resources.

Moreover, we need to invest in new infrastructure, in the fields of exploration as well as diversification. In the long run, the most important contribution towards a reliable energy supply is the careful use of resources.

That is, why it is so important, to invest in renewable energies, and to consistently improve energy efficiency.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This conference shows, that the region of Middle East and North Africa is capable of addressing issues of urgent importance for the future.

You will need to satisfy high expectations and set a precedent for courage, responsibility and confidence.

In my view, the aim of achieving greater development and prosperity, better climate protection and a larger measure of security through renewable energies justifies all the efforts involved.

With this in mind, I wish you every success at his conference!

Thank you very much for your attention.