

OPENING SPEECH

By Lord Mayor of Bonn, Mr Jürgen Nimptsch



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Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to extend a warm welcome to you here in the Old Town Hall, where you have met for your annual Bonn Seminar during the 2013 Subsidiary Bodies meetings to exchange views in an informal setting and, what is even more important, to build mutual trust. Trust among the partners from the South, and trust among the partners from North and South.

It is a special honor for us to host this one-day seminar and I have gladly opened the doors of our Old Town Hall to provide a suitable platform for this important meeting.

For those of you who are visiting Bonn – and this Old Town Hall – for the first time, I would like to make a few remarks about our city and its history and, in particular, about this splendid building.

Bonn was founded as a Roman settlement. Later Bonn used to be the residence of the Archbishops and Electors of Cologne. The most famous of them, Clemens August, built our Old Town Hall 275 years ago. The foundation stone was laid in 1737. In particular, I would like to draw your attention to this beautiful hall with its wall tapestries featuring scenes from Greek mythology.

Between 2010 and 2011, the entire building was restored in a huge effort, conserving it as a historic monument and adding future-oriented technology like our geo-thermal heating and cooling facilities.

Bonn and this baroque Town Hall have seen many international guests to date. The Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-Moon, and four of his predecessors have paid a visit to Bonn, honoring us by signing our Golden Book. And today you are our very special guests!

Apart from our historic Town Hall, you will find that history is visible all over Bonn – such as the traces of famous composer Ludwig van Beethoven, who was born a few steps from here. Beethoven's birthplace and our annual Beethoven Festival attract music lovers from all over the world.

Beethoven's compositions have helped to spread a powerful vision – his 9th Symphony inspires to reach out for a better world.

Bonn has adopted this vision. While the United Nations organizations in Bonn are “working towards sustainable development worldwide”, their efforts are supported by a Bonn-based sustainability cluster including federal ministries, businesses, the scientific community, the media and more than 150 internationally active NGOs. Our city has become a hub for sustainability and a platform for the international exchange on future-oriented issues.

We are always more than grateful to welcome new family members on board – members that enrich our international cluster of actors, that share our common philosophy and contribute with their ideas and visions.

We have the vision of a better future in Bonn, but we also share a common spirit. The spirit of peace, understanding, democracy and freedom is very present in our city! This “Bonn Spirit”, as a former Executive Secretary to a UN Convention called it, does make for a favorable atmosphere for multilateral cooperation, indeed. A spirit that will at times tip the balance during negotiations – a spirit that will make it easier to effect a compromise – a spirit that will help build mutual trust and understanding.

Therefore I am convinced that, with Bonn, you have chosen the perfect place for this ecbi Seminar.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I invite you to share your ideas and visions today. I wish you every success for the European Capacity Building Initiative and for a fruitful exchange!

Also, I hope that you will find some time to discover our city with its historic traces, its rich cultural life and beautiful surroundings.

Thank you for your attention!