

## Gabriel: A good signal for the G8 summit in Heiligendamm

Environment ministers agree on a Potsdam Initiative on biological diversity and identify a common base for climate protection

The meeting of the environment ministers of the G8 countries and the five major newly industrialising countries came to an end in Potsdam having set a definite course for the conservation of biological diversity and for climate protection. Federal Environment Minister Gabriel stressed that, as they are primarily responsible for climate change, the onus is particularly on industrialised countries to undertake climate protection and initiate measures to adapt to climate change. To this end, financing must be enhanced and the necessary structures improved. He called on industrialised countries to take on even more stringent commitments for a post-2012 follow-up regime to the Kyoto Protocol. "We have achieved a good interim result for the summit in Heiligendamm", said Gabriel. "It is an important sign that the five major newly industrialising countries and the eight leading industrialised countries have held open discussions with each other. We have made much better progress than I expected at the outset."

At the meeting it became clear that to achieve a real breakthrough, the scope of international environmental negotiations must be expanded. Economic and social development, poverty alleviation and access to affordable energy and raw materials are all part of an overall package. "We can break the logjam in international negotiations," said Federal Environment Minister Gabriel, "if we stop talking about each other and start talking with each other. In Potsdam, mutual recriminations had no place at the table."

On the topic of biodiversity, Gabriel said: "The clear message of this meeting is that we must jointly strengthen our endeavours to curb the massive loss of biological diversity. It was agreed that we must no longer delete nature's database, which holds massive potential for economic and social development."

The "Potsdam Initiative – Biological Diversity 2010" set in motion specific activities for the protection and sustainable use of biodiversity. A raft of measures in the fields of science, industry, trade and financing as well as for the protection of the world's oceans will contribute to considerably reducing the loss of biological diversity by 2010. In addition, a global study will analyse the economic significance of biodiversity. Sigmar Gabriel acknowledged the efforts already made by developing countries over recent years for the protection of biological diversity.

In the field of climate protection the environment ministers were able to identify a common base, in spite of differing opinions. In view of the dramatic developments linked to climate change, the political will to solve the problem was evident on all sides. The international climate negotiations urgently need momentum in order to achieve a follow-up regime to the Kyoto Protocol. The first commitment period of the Kyoto Protocol will expire in 2012.

"Potsdam was another important step for the climate year 2007", said Federal Environment

Minister Gabriel. "Following the great success of the EU Summit we have discussed with the most important international partners, in a very open and constructive atmosphere, how we can make progress in the climate negotiations. After this meeting, I am confident that we will be able to enter into comprehensive negotiations on the future of climate policy at the end of this year in Bali. It was especially important that we acknowledged the substantial efforts of developing countries for climate protection. In future, it will be a question of providing better support for their efforts - for instance in the protection of forests or in reforestation."

All countries acknowledged the findings of international climate research. The ministers agreed that efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions must stepped up significantly. Just recently, the report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) spelled out the warning signs on global warming. The ministers also discussed how measures for adapting to climate change can be increased and how the affected developing countries in particular can be better supported.

This year Germany holds the Presidency of the G8. In Potsdam the environment ministers have contributed to preparing the summit of G8 heads of state and government, which will take place from 6 to 8 June 2007 in Heiligendamm.