

Opening Speech Local Renewables

Donnerstag, 14.10., 9.30 h, Konzerthaus, Runder Saal

Dear ladies and gentlemen

I am very happy to welcome all of you here today on behalf of your host, the City of Freiburg. First and foremost, I would like to extend a cordial welcome to all participants and contributors. Many of you are visiting here from abroad and some of you are returning here for the second or third time. This shows us that our concept is working out and that our topics are prevailing. In the next three days we hope to discuss one of the world's most burning issues with you: What can we do locally – in our cities and communities, in national and international politics, in associations and organisations, in science and, last but not least, the energy industry – in order to reduce the dramatic impacts of the climate change?

The title of this conference – Local Renewables – gives an answer. We intend to talk about local concepts, because it is mainly cities and local organisations which have to find answers locally and make their contribution locally. In order to do this, we would like to look at practical examples of local proportions to see how we can act in our communities and bring about change. Climate protection cannot be seen as a national or international challenge alone. Above all, effective climate protection is a task of the communities, of the environmental organisations and of every citizen. Because of this, we in the cities have to assume a particular responsibility. The European cities are accountable for more than fifty percent of all European CO₂ emissions. For Asian mega cities the proportion is even higher.

The term “Renewables” indicates that one of the ways to address this problem must be the further exploration of the potentials of renewable energy sources and their utilisation on a local scale – through the use of solar energy, of wind and water power, of biomass and geothermal energy. I hope that we in Freiburg can give you a few ideas in this area, but we are also very curious on hearing about your experiences and on learning from you.

Ladies and gentlemen, please allow me to welcome our partners at ICLEI, represented by Wolfgang Teubner of the European Secretariat which situated here in Freiburg. ICLEI has been at home in Freiburg with its European headquarters for roughly twenty years. When they first came here, ICLEI was still a small NGO with only few members. Since then it has grown into a global network of cities and communities, of environmental organisations and governmental institutions, with members all over the world.

But we are more than just good neighbours. The ICLEI and the City of Freiburg are partners cooperating in many regards. ICLEI's expertise and experience have become very important for our urban policy, because serious progress in climate protection and sustainable urban development always depend on the best practice examples of others. This conference aims at sharing these experiences.

Ladies and gentlemen, the list of participants shows me that the same questions that move us in Freiburg move the people in every country. Because of this, we have initiated this conference three years ago. This is already our third meeting.

The conference location and immediate environment of the Local Renewables have changed this time. We have moved the conference from our trade fair centre into the city centre, to the "Konzerthaus" concert hall. And we are going to share the roof with another conference for the next three days, the "Solar Summits". Ladies and gentlemen, of course this is not a coincidence. We think there is a thematic connection here too. The topic of both meetings is "The Future of Mobility". This way we are addressing two different groups of recipients: Here at Local Renewables it is mainly the experts from the cities and communities and the environmental organisations, and next door, at "Solar Summits", it is scientific researchers and developers – or in other words, experts from the universities and the industry.

I am grateful for this cooperation because we need both approaches to find new ways in mobility. Allow me to bring up the well-known example of hybrid and electric cars. They are going to play an ever increasing part in individual traffic, and much sooner than we have expected. Electric vehicles operate almost emission-free and could contribute significantly to the reduction of the CO₂ emissions of traffic in a sustainable way. But in order for them to do so, we need better and more efficient technologies than we have today. We need an infrastructure of charging stations and powerful storage batteries. And we have to put our heads together to explore other technologies for the generation and storage of electrical power; such as hydrogen for example.

Ladies and gentlemen, electric vehicles still require energy. They are only an effective contribution towards climate protection if we manage to generate the power for them from renewable sources, from water power, wind power, solar energy and biomass. And herein lies the connection between the two conferences happening at the same time under this roof.

But allow me to draw your attention to another point: Future mobility entails more than using electric motors for individual traffic. Future mobility must emphasise public transport, bicycle traffic and pedestrian traffic. These are the focus points of Freiburg's traffic concept. The modal split for trips within the city shows us that more than two thirds of all trips in Freiburg are accomplished with one of these three means of transportation. On average, comparable cities achieve a proportion of about fifty percent. In Freiburg it is roughly seventy percent, and only a mere thirty percent of all trips are done by car.

Ladies and gentlemen, we therefore have to keep two objectives in mind when we talk about the future of mobility:

Firstly The strengthening of those means of transportation which require little or no energy – such as cycling, walking or public transport – and

Secondly in the area of individual mobility – that is for journeys realised with a car, or better, with car sharing – new motor technologies which do not emit CO₂.

This also means: Wherever energy is required, in the shape of battery power or for running trams, it has to be our goal to generate this power from renewable sources. I am very proud to say that we in Freiburg have moved a step closer towards this goal. Since the beginning of 2009 all trams in Freiburg run on one hundred percent renewable energy from water power – we call this Eco-power. This reduces our CO₂ footprint by roundabout seven thousand (7.000) tonnes – and is even more effective than producing the energy for an entire part of town with a co-generation plant fuelled on wood.

I am also very proud to say that we in Freiburg have the scientific expertise of the Fraunhofer-Institute for Solar Energy Systems at our disposal. Our future mobility has become an issue of growing importance for both research and practical application.

Ladies and gentlemen, over thirty-five years ago the people from the Oberrhein region have stopped the construction of a nuclear power plant through protest – a singular event in Germany history. Through their dissent they initiated the energy turnaround. Twenty-five years ago, Freiburg's city council passed the first Local Energy Supply Concept. Its objectives are still valid today. Since 2007, Freiburg's urban policy is governed by the objectives of our Climate Protection Concept to reduce CO₂ emissions by 40 percent until the year 2030. Please let us make this

conference into a signal showing that an energy turnaround can also entail a change of course in traffic policy.

Having said this, I hope and wish to all of us that the Local Renewables and the Solar Summits will inspire us and that this new side-by-side will result into a fruitful cooperation. The exhibition in the lobby was created from the results of the Solar Summits. Let us also use the outcome of this conference together – we have a common goal.

I am very confident that the Local Renewables conference will be a great success. Great inspirations and ideas to all of you and enjoy your stay in Freiburg!