

This success is partly due to structural changes in the new federal states but also to massive investments in improving energy efficiency. The industrial sector and power stations deserve particular mention in this connection. With the measures agreed upon hitherto we will achieve an overall reduction of roughly 17 % by the year 2005.

So much remains to be done. And we all know that, not only in the field of environmental protection, the last part of a journey is often particularly difficult. However, we stand by this ambitious target. And, naturally, we also stand by our commitment within the context of EU burden-sharing.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

That is why my Government has mapped out a course for further progress in climate protection.

Firstly, since April Germany has had an eco-tax raising the cost of energy consumption. The revenue generated is being used to ease the tax burden on labor lost.

Secondly, we have not only launched an ecological tax reform. Last summer we also decided upon the steps to be taken in the next few years. For I believe it is crucial that we use a long-term, gradual increase in energy taxes to send a clear message: it is worth everyone's while saving energy. It pays to invest in increasing energy efficiency.

Thirdly, we will continue along this path. In the middle of next year the German Government intends to present a comprehensive national reduction strategy for greenhouse gases which will follow on from the existing programme and lay down any necessary further measures.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As a result of the particular risks of nuclear energy the German Government has decided to phase out this technology. Naturally, we are being asked how we intend to match this decision with our ambitious climate protection targets.

Firstly, I would like to state clearly that phasing out nuclear energy is not, in my view, our prime task. Rather, our aim must be to introduce an ecologically and economically viable energy supply policy. That is the challenge facing us.