

However, environmental protection is not a luxury. Only if we safeguard humanity's sources of life can there be viable and lasting economic development. This applies to individual countries just as much as to the world as a whole. Anything else would be a dangerous miscalculation.

This is nowhere more evident than in the warming of the Earth's atmosphere and the greenhouse effect: no other environmental problem poses such a major threat to all of humanity.

And for this very reason we must ask ourselves at the beginning of the 5th session of the Conference of the Parties: What is the current state of climate protection? The international discussion on this issue has been going on for twenty years now. And it can be said that much that was initially regarded as inconceivable has been achieved.

The Framework Convention on Climate Change negotiated in Rio forms the basis under international law for worldwide climate protection. The necessary institutions have been created. In the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, the industrialized countries made their first ever binding commitment under international law to considerably reduce their greenhouse gas emissions. This is undoubtedly a genuine breakthrough.

However, there have also been setbacks: The commitment by the industrialized countries to reduce carbon dioxide emissions to 1990 levels by next year will not be kept by many major countries.

And this affects the core of our international efforts. It must be clear to us all that people all over the world have been following the consultations of the international community with growing interest, particularly since Rio. And they rightly expect that what has been agreed upon in lengthy and difficult negotiations is now actually put into practice. Anyone wishing to remain credible in the debate on climate policy must therefore show the world that they really are making every effort. They must implement at home what they have pledged on the international stage.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This call goes, of course, also out to my country. The Federal Republic of Germany declared at the First Conference of States Parties in Berlin in April 1995 that it would reduce its CO₂ emissions by 25% down from its 1990 level by the year 2005. This remains an ambitious target. We have already achieved a reduction of 13.2 %.