

Mr President, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to cordially welcome you to the 5th session of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change here in Bonn, the home of the Convention Secretariat.

This is Bonn's first major climate conference. During the last few months the Convention Secretariat, with the support of the city and many other helpers, has worked non-stop. I would like to thank everyone who has lent a hand to ensure the smooth organization of this conference.

Bonn is Germany's first UN city. It is currently evolving into a centre for environmental and development policy. In addition to the Secretariats of the Framework Convention on Climate Change and the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, the Secretariat of the Convention to Combat Desertification has now commenced work in the Federal city on the Rhine.

The establishment of these Secretariats in Bonn has created favourable conditions for enhanced cooperation among the various United Nations environmental conventions. A department of the World Health Organization will follow shortly. And Bonn would like to host further UN secretariats.

With the extension and redesign of the former plenary area of the German Bundestag we intend to firmly establish Bonn as a venue for international conferences. In doing so we will also create better working conditions for the Convention Secretariat and an excellent environment for international conferences. The German Government will therefore continue its campaign to bring more United Nations organizations to Bonn.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

In a few days' time, on 9 November, it will be ten years to the day since the Wall was torn down in Germany. The fall of the "Iron Curtain" also marked the ending of the East-West conflict. This global conflict had shaped international politics for more than four decades following the Second World War.

Many people suffered during this conflict. Its ending has raised expectations of an additional peace dividend. For we have been given a chance to pay much closer attention to one of humanity's core tasks for the future: preserving the sources of life.