

GMES - „Geoland-Forum\_5“; 12. bis 14. Mai, Berlin

## **Grußwort**

Dienstag, 12. Mai 2009, ~ 12.15 Uhr,  
Seminaris CampusHotel, Berlin, Takustraße 39

Dear Mr. Schulte-Braucks, dear Prof. Grünreich,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a pleasure as well as an honor for me to address you, the participants of the Berlin Geoland-Forum, today. To some of you my participation might be a surprise - even more as you have already taken up your agenda.

There are two main reasons why I am delighted to participate in this conference:

First, as I am the Deputy Head of the CDU/CSU Parliamentary Group responsible for education, research, environment and nature protection, your conference is very close to the topics I try to support in our parliament, the Bundestag.

Secondly, just some days ago I visited Infoterra-Germany which is located a few kilometres from here in Potsdam, my constituency. As many amongst you are representatives of start-up companies you might agree that Infoterra in Potsdam is a good example of the dynamics that characterize your business and your field of research. Infoterra already employs 85 people and keeps constantly growing. I was deeply impressed by the high

level of motivation and skill among the mainly young people working for Infoterra.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I have been following the European space projects GMES and Galileo for many years now. Galileo has always been in the limelight of the media, whereas GMES remained rather unnoticed by the public. You will certainly agree that GMES is at least as important as Galileo. I am firmly convinced that the Berlin Geoland-Forum will contribute substantially to increase the public's awareness of global monitoring, its chances for avoiding environmental damages, as well as its economic potential for creating new technologies for space and new jobs on earth.

Against the background of the current economic situation, politicians everywhere in the world now agree that investments in science and in new technologies belong to the best remedies against the crisis. Space and satellite technologies as well as all technologies of sensing and processing data will certainly belong to the "winners" of this new "technology-awareness", both in industrial and in developing countries.

Global changes of the environment and its various effects and side-effects belong to the most dangerous challenges to humankind. Hence, the issues of environmental protection became top priorities of national and international political agendas during the last few years.

Environmental problems like land-erosion, desertification, lack of clean water, uncontrolled growth of megacities, the severe situation of rain-forests and the still ineffective use of arable land – just to name some of the issues – keep politicians all over the world busy these days. In the process of establishing strategies to tackle environmental challenges, politicians and other decision-makers are dependent on data and information, global information in the truest sense of the word.

Apart from observing long-term global changes:

Environmental data collected by satellites and geo-information services provided by projects like Geoland and companies like Infoterra are indispensable today to enable politicians to react to natural disasters such as earthquakes or droughts in a minimum of time.

The Geoland-project will enable us to provide better information on the change of land use over time. And with Geoland, we do not focus just on Europe. We also offer the Geoland-services to other parts of the world, mainly to Africa.

For many reasons Africa is very close to Europe - not just in geographical terms but also because Africa's problems affect Europe, too. Africa is a continent with a huge potential for a good future of its citizens. The close cooperation between the European Union and Africa is of utmost importance to all of us.

Geoland will also help to provide better information on important topics like water quality or forest monitoring. Those of you living in Germany know that we Germans have a special relationship to our woods. "Waldsterben", the sickness of trees, was and still is an important issue in Germany. As far as Germany is concerned, the situation of forests has improved considerably. However, in parts of Southern Europe and in many parts of Africa deforestation is still a big problem. Instead of young trees, deserts are growing. We cannot accept this! Geoland will help to improve our monitoring abilities and to take counteraction.

Everyone knows how important the quality of our water is. Do you remember how polluted rivers were in some parts of Europe just twenty years ago? Did anyone believe that salmon would swim again in the river Rhine as it does today? We made considerable progress in supplying good drinking water in the last few years in Europe. But much more has to be done in order to hand over our rivers to our children in a state they can enjoy.

As there are just a few weeks left until the next election to the European Parliament, I would like to remind all of us that GMES is also a good example for the fact that Europe works in favour of its citizens. We build up infrastructures in space and on the earth which will help to make our common environment safer and healthier.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The German Federal Government and our Parliament, the „Bundestag“, have supported GMES ever since the idea came up. I am proud to say that Germany took the lead in the GMES-programme. Germany signed the biggest share of this project at the Ministerial Conference of the European Space Agency last November.

Let me conclude by saying that Germany will remain a reliable GMES-partner and will continue to support projects like Geoland. Germany will also remain in the forefront of nations developing technologies for the protection of our planet. And we will go on supporting people like you, cooperating for our future.

I wish you all the best for your conference!

Thank you for your attention.