

- The importance of the spoken word -

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A few words on being appointed special advisor to the German Federal Government on climate issues.

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Right Honourable Federal Chancellor,
Right Honourable ministers,
Ladies and gentlemen,

Chancellor Merkel has appointed me as special advisor to her government on issues related to climate change. While this is a tremendous honour, more than anything it is a duty.

Climate change is the greatest global challenge of the 21st century. For the very first time, we are having to deal with an environment problem that can only be solved globally.

Those who know me know that I have been convinced of this for many years. I want industry to accept its role and responsibility in solving the problem of climate change. Most recently the report by Sir Nicholas Stern clearly sets out and reiterates above all the huge risks facing the world economy. Yet he also established that the problem can be solved with the aid of wise investments. And this is where private industry comes into the picture.

For the good news is that it is not too late. We have the technological facilities to rise to the challenge, and at a cost that would not lead to some kind of global recession. Quite the reverse: tackling climate change can be an engine for renewal. The difficult part is that we only have very few years in which to organise the political consensus required. Over the next twelve months, you my right honourable Doctor Merkel, in your position as chair of the European Council and above all, also as chair of the countries of the G8 group, will find yourself in a central position to be able - I hope in a decisive way - to push forward this international process. I greatly admire the bravery and decisiveness with which you are tackling this very politically complicated issue.

I am not a politician, but I have responsibilities in my role as group CEO of a large energy company. And as such, I am striving to persuade my colleagues in international industry to be in favour for a constructive global solution to the problem of climate change. Naturally, this must be done in partnership with politicians and NGOs. We need a consistent global regime that is in line with the market to set a ceiling on greenhouse gases and to encourage new methods and technologies. We undoubtedly have to establish this regime in the next few years and it has to be accepted within companies. For this reason, and particularly as Community Leader for the energy companies within the World Economic Forum, it pleases me immensely that the German Chancellor, at the start of her twin leadership role in 2007 is going to hold the opening speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January, and so give the theme of climate change the importance appropriate to it.

Ladies and Gentlemen, thank you.