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**DIES-Konferenz: Achieving the Millennium Development Goals:**  
A Challenge for Global Higher Education

***„eMDeeGising Academic Cooperation“***

Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen  
dear colleagues,

Extreme poverty is more than just a humanitarian concern. It is a danger to peace, stability, security and environmental sustainability in an increasingly fragile world. In recognizing the global dimension of development problems, many world leaders have subscribed to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals. Most of these are to be reached by the year 2015. The MDGs were declared in 2000. Five years after (and only 10 more to go) time has come to review the progress achieved so far. Since 2000 partnerships have been forged and the world's largest Summit on Sustainable Development was held in Johannesburg.

The goals have clearly been identified by now but the global roadmap to reach them remains sketchy.

I am honoured, pleased and happy to welcome you warmly here in Berlin to discuss the implications, challenges and opportunities that the MDGs hold for Higher Education. The conference "Achieving the Millennium Development Goals: A Challenge for Global Higher Education" is part of the DIES series. DIES stands for "Dialogue on Innovative Higher Education Strategies" and refers to activities in the area of higher education management activities jointly organised by the Association of Universities and other Higher Education Institutions in Germany, the German Rector's Conference (HRK), and the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD). The conference series was established in 2002 with the aim to foster an international dialogue about the need and strategies for creating innovative and efficient policies for higher education. Today's event is the fifth DIES conference and we are pleased that GTZ joined in to organise it.

I am genuinely convinced that more can and must be done to mobilise and integrate the world of Higher Education into the MDG process – and vigorously so, if we are serious about attaining the MDGs on schedule.

Education, and in particular Higher Education, is indispensable for the MDG process. Good governance, social progress, technical and economic development cannot happen without proactive involvement of the universities.

It is in fact the universities that are able to generate and provide crucial framework conditions which are needed to ensure the lasting success of any developmental intervention, and even development at large.

First of all, development always requires leadership and experts.

One could define “*development*” as knowledge being applied to bring about change to the better.

Knowledge always has to be generated, managed and applied. This is only possible, if adequate local human capital is available. Therefore any institution of development cooperation needs to start with providing and creating qualified native experts. Thus academic cooperation should be an integral part of development cooperation.

Ideally foreign donors fund a development project for a limited time only. Experience has shown that there is only one way to ensure that a project produces long lasting effects: There must be local, native experts who can make use of their unique local know-how. Only these local experts are able to bring about the transformation processes initiated (and intended) by development cooperation.

This yet another reason, why opportunities for higher education for local experts should be carefully integrated into development cooperation from the very beginning. The native experts do not necessarily have to be educated in institutions situated in the industrialised world. In any case, development cooperation needs to ensure that these experts are being made available on the ground.

Universities – especially in developing countries- play a pivotal role for regional and local planning. Often they are the only adequate, qualified partners on the ground when it comes to the need of consultation – in particular when planning a project.

Thus local universities should be strengthened. There is also a strategic reason for this, if we look at the issue from a broader perspective. We all are well aware about the global trend towards knowledge-based societies.

Developing countries must generate their own knowledge, transfer and apply it- in tune with their own cultures and traditions.

We have made very encouraging experiences with our alumni in this regard. Often they have become key agents of change. One alumna in Thailand, for instance, founded a study course with great impact on food security. We keep the contact details of 20,000 alumni constantly updated. These local experts can be mobilised for conflict management and development work. It could hardly be any clearer that the education sector is the driving engine, if we speak about development.

If you give money to a poor individual to buy food - that is a kind gesture but it is only when you teach him or her how to make a living that you really help.

Money - or the lack of it - is not the decisive factor in development. Many countries do in fact have enough money to reach the MDGs. However, funds have often been used inefficiently. A recent study by the World Bank Institute estimated that one trillion of US Dollar is wasted in bribes. It might seem naive to say education can create better, more sincere and honest individuals – but certainly it can contribute to raising ethical standards. The DAAD strives to promote good governance by educating future leaders. We do select our scholarship holders very carefully, picking only the very best.

Scholarships help to promote the careers of these promising individuals - for instance, Wangari Muta Maathai, who will become the first African woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize - so we contribute to forming better leadership for development.

Through weekend seminars, summer and winter academies we promote the ideals of transparency and rule of law.

Development will make huge progress, when physicians, teachers, engineers and researchers from poor countries will be qualified and empowered to carve the destiny of their native countries. Development is about justice and ownership.

For us in the university and research community development is at the core of our identity – and naturally we care about development cooperation between North and South. For universities in the North development cooperation in fact offers many strategic opportunities to focus their research and teaching. Development cooperation helps universities to internationalise themselves and to become more attractive and competitive.

Science has produced an excellent record when it comes to achieving development targets, for instance in medicine.

MDGs are interrelated and should be understood in a holistic way. They represent a complex phenomenon good for interesting scientific discussions.

Moreover, MDGs are measurable and monitorable goals consisting of 18 timebound targets supported by 48 measurable indicators. This starting point is well suited for scientific approaches and even if it were only for research and diagnostic capacity, the work of Higher Education Institutions would be indispensable for the common effort to remove some key barriers to development.

We at the DAAD had the MDGs already at the heart of our work –long before they were proclaimed. Ever since we have been refocussing our programs to make pointed, well defined contributions.

Higher Education Institutions are crucial in achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

The DAAD uses all of its instruments to promote progress towards achieving the MDGs: from awarding individual scholarships to exporting complete study courses. We work at all academic levels and in all disciplines.

Research, training, expert advice, independent monitoring are some key components that universities world-wide can contribute to attaining the MDGs. This conference provides you with the opportunity to look with some depth at the chances and challenges of the MDG process for the sector of Higher Education.

Having followed the discussions about development cooperation, I am sometimes left with the impression that some still seem to think that transfers of money alone will alleviate poverty. This could be a tragic error.

Money seems to get less and less as we distribute it: And you all know we are getting short and shorter of money.

Yet knowledges doubles, if we share it. Transferring knowledge is in fact development cooperation that will sustain. It is because of this that the United Nations proclaimed a Decade of Education for Sustainable Development, starting next year.

Together we can add systemic approaches, methods and our creativity of thought to the MDG process.

I would like to wish you inspiring discussions.

Thank you.