

Ladies and Gentleman, distinguished guests,

my name is Hanns-Wolf Rackel, I work for the German Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ). The past couple of days have been very interesting for me, I have learned a lot about striking examples of close co-operation between universities in Germany and our partner countries abroad. The ministry takes a great interest in the conference series "Dialogue on innovative Higher Education Strategies" that is jointly organised by the German Academic Exchange Service and the German Rectors' Conference. We are very pleased, that the discussion which was initiated at the MDG conference in Berlin last November has now been resumed at this meeting by focusing on very practical examples of collaboration between universities in a field which is of great relevance for development co-operation.

Higher education experts from the North and the South have jointly invested a lot of energy and effort in order to find solutions of how to combine different types of education with the aim of achieving the most beneficial effect on the potential of experts in developing countries. This joint effort to strengthen the higher education co-operation with developing countries also corresponds to the principles of the work of the BMZ. Hence, after two days of intensive discussion and exchange of experience and information I am very glad to see that there are a number of very promising approaches of "Cross-Border Education" which point the way ahead into the future. I think yesterdays discussions have also shown that intercultural understanding and communication is a key factor for successful joint projects. In this context I appreciate a lot that the German Academic Exchange Service has integrated a scheme of intercultural seminars into the programme "Postgraduate

Courses for Professionals with Relevance to Developing Countries". The BMZ has supported this scholarship programme for many years – and looking at the results in terms of cross border networks, I can say that we have made a lot of progress and will do what we can to continue to do so. In addition to these Postgraduate courses which mainly take place in Germany, we also provide funds for the so-called "Sur-Place/ Third Country Programme", and the regional scholarship programmes, which are financed on a partnership basis with the respective countries.

In accordance with the objectives of the German Academic Exchange Service the BMZ considers the university co-operation between German Institutions of Higher Education and their counterparts in the South crucial for effective and sustainable partnership for our countries. This is why we provide the funds for a whole range of DAAD programmes beyond the individual support by scholarships, which aim at capacity and network building. Examples are follow-up contacts for Alumni of German universities from developing countries, institution building at the partner universities abroad, and – in terms of additional measures – projects focusing on the improvement of higher education management. I am very satisfied to have witnessed yesterdays lively discussion on the combination of outstanding training centres at German universities and Centres of Excellence in the developing countries. It is certainly a positive development if these different training centres are intensifying their collaboration by taking the full advantage of their own resources and the existing funding schemes. Again it was encouraging to hear, that the Alumni of German universities from developing countries actually play an active part and leading role within partnership networks. Already some time ago the BMZ has recognised the potential of specialists and experts who were trained at German universities. Thus we favour the strong participation of this group within higher education co-operation.

All DAAD programmes that the Ministry provides funds for aim at junior professionals and future decision-makers, who – so we hope – will act as change agents and will work for the betterment of their countries upon their return. Here the BMZ aims at achieving the utmost synergies in two directions: On the one hand the collaborating partners should make the best use of the different study offers by combining them in an effective way. On the other hand the higher education co-operation must contribute to achieving the MDGs to the greatest extent. We firmly believe, and I think the discussion just now has confirmed this view, that there is in fact a great potential in the close co-operation of universities for the ultimate objective to help achieving the Millennium Development Goals.

Another interesting aspect from my point of view was yesterday's discussion on "Distance Education". In this context I should like to mention that the BMZ is trying to bridge the "Digital Divide" between industrialised and developing countries by various kinds of measures. The projects of Distance Education that were presented yesterday deserve our support because they also help to reduce the duration of study abroad. However, I want to stress that face-to-face learning cannot be replaced as it contributes to intercultural understanding and communication and – this is to hope – will help to develop respect for the other. Thus, I highly appreciate if the universities are devoting themselves to this subject in a particular way.

I can assure you that my ministry will continue its co-operation and staunch support for the university co-operation between your countries and Germany by supporting the German Academic Exchange Service in future.

I wish you all a safe journey home and lots of energy and strength for working at our common objective to achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Thank you.