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Eight Key Issues for a Post-2015 Global Development and Sustainability Agenda

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Introduction

2014 is a decisive year for the elaboration of new global development and sustainability goals that will replace the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in 2015. Numerous global problems and crises of the last decades remain unsolved and new problems continue to emerge. Countries in both the Global North and Global South face common challenges, such as growing social inequity, continued and increasing environmental degradation, growing resource consumption and the aftermath of the financial, economic and food crises, as well as the intensifying of climate change. The development of new goals provides an opportunity to address these issues. With their focus on poverty eradication and human development, the MDGs have achieved a great amount. Nonetheless, they have had their shortcomings, for example in the fields of justice, peace, good governance, and respect for human rights. They neglect to link social development processes with ecological, social, and economic sustainability, and omit to question the concept of growth in light of evident planetary boundaries.

The Rio+20 conference in 2012 set out the right course by promoting the development of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for all nations. A United Nations (UN) Intergovernmental Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals (OWG) was tasked with preparing a proposal for a new set of global goals that integrate the development and sustainability agendas. This and further proposals will form the basis of a new global framework agreement to be negotiated and passed by September 2015. The following **“Eight Key Issues for a Post-2015 Global Development and Sustainability Agenda”** highlight core goals and content for

- 1 For detailed civil society positions, see: VENRO (2013): Setting the right course – For a future-orientated post-2015 development and sustainability agenda, Berlin. http://www.deine-stimme-gegen-armut.de/fileadmin/BILDER/Illustration/Fachpublikationen/WeichenStellen_Post-2015__EN_v05.pdf ; German NGO Forum on Environment and Development (2013): The Ecological Dimension in the Post-2015-Agenda for Sustainable Development, Berlin. http://www.forumue.de/fileadmin/userupload/AG_Weitere_Themen/Rio_20/The_Ecological_Dimension_in_the_Post-2015_Agenda_German_NGO_Forum_on_Environment_and_Development.pdf
- 2 World Commission on Environment and Development (1987): Our Common Future, Chapter 2. Towards Sustainable Development, Geneva. <http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-02.htm>
- 3 The principle of free, prior and informed consent mainly concerns the rights of local communities, in particular indigenous peoples, to decide on issues directly affecting them.



FX Original performing at the “Weltfest” in Berlin 2013

a new global agenda. By no means are these key issues meant to be exclusive or complete, but they include what we believe to be fundamental elements of a post-2015 agenda.¹

Principles and Guidelines

Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.² A new framework agreement must therefore include a new model for prosperity and a new understanding of development. This requires an approach that is based on human rights, aims at the well-being for all and links poverty eradication with social, economic, and ecological sustainability.

To this end, the new development and sustainability agenda must build on the following key elements: decent life for all; human rights; gender, generational and distributive justice and respect of planetary boundaries as a guiding principle and call for action; the complete eradication of extreme poverty and hunger; and the safeguarding of natural resources and ecosystems. The principles adopted in Rio in 1992, such as the polluter-pays principle, solidarity principle, precautionary principle, principle of free, prior and informed consent³, and principle of joint but differentiated responsibility, must constitute the new agenda’s central pillars.

Nearly all nations have now ratified the central UN human rights conventions and have thereby committed themselves to respecting, protecting, and ensuring, inter alia, the right to food, water, education, social security, and health. A sustainability agenda must not fall short of such binding international standards, and existing international agreements must not be relativized or watered down by the post-2015 agenda. To the contrary, the new agenda's framework and goals must build on existing international agreements. Creating coherence, which includes closing existing loopholes, between the new goals and existing agreements and commitments is essential.

The post-2015 agenda can only be successful if it is universally applied. Furthermore, it has to be drawn up, implemented, monitored, and evaluated by states, civil society, and the private sector. Success will also depend on its effects not discriminating against or excluding anyone. Nation states will primarily be responsible for the agenda's implementation. Such responsibility must be backed by clear-cut commitments and accountability regulations, for example through adequate transparency measures, regular monitoring, collective pressure and the possibility to hold states accountable in case of failure to comply with their commitments. There must also be just and binding regulations on financing the post-2015 agenda.

The new agenda is explicitly directed at all states. Thus, it must formulate goals for countries of the Global South and call on countries of the Global North to take on responsibility. This means that Germany must also implement the new agenda, and national actors will have to take on responsibility to implement this process both at a national and global level. The German government, civil society, and other stakeholders need to initiate a public debate on new global goals and campaign for support of these key issues.

What we demand of the German government

German civil society believes that the German government has yet to fully understand that a post-2015 agenda also needs to be implemented in Germany and the European Union. We therefore expect the German government to push for central demands to become embedded within the new global agenda. Equally, the German government needs to initiate a broad process to consistently break down and apply the post-2015 agenda to the German context.

The German government must formulate clear national goals for a post-2015 agenda. In particular, these goals should include a commitment to sustainable economic practices and climate and environmental protection as it is in this fields that the Global North's greatest responsibility lies. This will require revising and, where necessary, adapting Germany's National Sustainability Strategy as well as comprehensively implementing existing agreements and programmes. If the SDGs are actually taken seriously, i.e. become guidelines, they will extend far beyond environmental and development policy and will have implications for various policy fields, such as foreign affairs, trade, agriculture, social and energy policy. As further important building blocks of a new agenda, equality of opportunity and justice need to be granted top political priority and be consistently implemented also in Germany.

Moreover, we expect the German government to promote a system of global governance oriented towards the achievement of the SDGs. Future programmes and projects by actors such as the World Bank or the Group of 20 (G20) – the most important industrialised and developing economies – can no longer be allowed to thwart the achievement of the SDGs; to the contrary, they must actively promote their achievement.



A slum in Hanoi, Vietnam

Eight Key Issues

1. Eradicate Extreme Poverty and Overcome Inequality

Since 1990, the number of people living in extreme poverty has been reduced by 50%. Still, over 1.2 billion people have to live on less than 1.25 USD per day.⁴ Overcoming extreme poverty by 2030 is possible.⁵ This must become a central goal of a global development and sustainability agenda and be understood as a first step towards completely eradicating poverty in a multi-dimensional sense. However, the growing social, political, and economic imbalances are an obstacle in the fight against poverty.

4 Development Initiatives (2013): Investments to end poverty. Real money, real choices, real lives, Bristol. http://devinit.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Investments_to_End_Poverty_full_report.pdf

5 World Bank Group (2014): Jim Yong Kim says World Can End Extreme Poverty and Increase Shared Prosperity, New York. <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/video/2013/04/02/jim-kim-world-can-end-extreme-poverty>

6 Oxfam (2014): Working for the few – political capture and economic inequality. Briefing Paper 178, Oxford. <http://www.oxfam.org/sites/www.oxfam.org/files/bp-working-for-few-political-capture-economic-inequality-200114-en.pdf>

Currently, 1% of the global population owns nearly half of the total global wealth.⁶ The new agenda will therefore also have to focus on overcoming inequality and aim to achieve decent working conditions.

During the negotiations for a post-2015 agenda, we therefore call on the German government to commit itself to:

- Establish the **complete eradication of extreme poverty** by 2030 as a central goal. To break the vicious circle of poverty and environmental degradation, measures to overcome poverty will also need to consider the preservation and sustainable use of natural resources.
- Agree upon **differentiated indicators** and collect **detailed data** to regularly and promptly control the implementation of goals with regard to all population groups and regions.
- Include **overcoming inequality within and between states** as a central goal and prioritize the introduction of progressive steering systems as well as an increase of transparency.



A young girl at the International Women's Day in Darfur, Sudan

2. Justice and a Decent Life for All

For a new global agenda to actually tackle the causes of poverty – not only its effects – it must be based on a human-rights approach and aim to overcome structures of inequality and structural discrimination.

Social security, decent work, equality, education, health and clean drinking water, and sanitation are essential preconditions for people to lead a decent life and develop their potential. A new global development and sustainability agenda must therefore include these preconditions as human rights. The new agenda must ensure that all people have universal access to healthcare (systems, products, and services), education, as well as water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH). In particular, measures should focus on girls, women, and vulnerable social groups.

During the negotiations for a post-2015 agenda, we therefore call on the German government to commit itself to:

- Make **human rights** as they are set out and anchored in the codified human rights norms, standards, and instruments, into an overarching principle that permeates all goals of the new agenda.
- Stipulate social justice and the implementation of a **human right to social security** as central goals within the new agenda.
- Establish **decent work and basic social security for all** as a **human right** in the catalogue of goals, independently of whether a person is employed in the formal or informal economy and also for care-workers. Measures must include the establishment of national baselines for social security and the creation of decent working conditions that offer living wages at a minimum. On a global scale, the rights to organise oneself in a union or independent representation of interests, or to strike and demonstrate, must also be secured.
- Include the enforcement of **gender equality both as a stand-alone goal as well as a cross-cutting issue**. In particular, concrete goals and indicators conducive to gender equality need to be explicitly stated in the fields of social, political, and economic participation, education, health, and the struggle against domestic and sexualised violence and violence in war and conflicts.
- Ensure that all of the new agenda's goals and indicators **explicitly take into account and anchor inclusion, equality, and non-discrimination of people with disabilities**.
- Include **children's provision, protection and participation rights** in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights on the Child.
- Include the availability of **efficient and high-quality healthcare** for all and establish as a principle the **access to efficient, safe, and high-quality healthcare products**

and services. Attention should particularly be paid to women and girls with the objective to further reduce mother and child mortality. Moreover, priority must be given to promoting **sexual and reproductive health and rights**, with particular regard to the needs of girls and sexual minorities.

- Ensure the implementation of the **human right to education** together with a commitment to **offer high-quality education** to all within the new global agenda. Steps must be taken to ensure that all children receive at least a **basic education** (preschool, primary, and lower secondary education) that leads to measurable education outcomes with regard to specified parameters by 2030.
- Include the **human right to clean water and sanitation**. Under international law, water should be recognised as a public good and the commercialisation of water use should be banned. Universal and barrier-free access to clean water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) in the long-term must be ensured at home, schools, healthcare centres, and workplaces.
- Establish **universal access to sustainable energy, a significant reduction of global industrial energy consumption, a doubling of current global energy efficiency and of the share of renewables** in the global energy mix in the new global agenda. Thereby, the UN Secretary-General's Sustainable Energy for All initiative⁷ should be supported and linked to clearly defined human rights and ecological and social standards.

3. Safeguard Functioning Ecosystems and the Sustainable Use of Natural Resources

Intact, diverse, and functional ecosystems, such as forests, oceans, and other water bodies, are humanity's existential basis for life and provide the foundation for all life and economic activity through their resources and services. Furthermore, nature has an important cultural as well as spiritual significance for various societies. All nations and societies depend on the availability of sufficient and sustainably used natural resources. Whether for food supply, energy, raw materials, or infrastructure and settlements – natural resources are key in any society's development.

An economic model as well as consumption and lifestyle patterns based on massive and unlimited resource consumption currently dominate globally. This is accompanied by an increased need for land for agriculture, settlements, and transportation routes, as well as an over-exploitation of natural resources. As a consequence, the size, quality, and functionality of ecosystems are reduced, and biodiversity as well as ecosystem services for people are lost. The squandering, exploitation, and overuse of resources (agricultural land, water cycles, forests, fishing stocks, etc.) is constantly increasing. Environmental stress, such as the over-accumulation of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, overburdens the self-regulating capacities of bio-physical systems and eventually exceeds the planetary boundaries. As a result, many societies are losing the basis for their livelihoods or seeing their future perspectives deeply compromised. Overuse leads to and reinforces poverty in societies heavily dependent on natural resources.

Protecting biological diversity and restoring ecosystem functionality and capacity on all levels – from a global to a local level – must therefore be one of the central pillars of a post-2015 agenda. This should include sustainable availability and accessibility of, as well as the just distribution and equal access to, natural resources.

During the negotiations for a post-2015 agenda, we therefore call on the German government to commit itself to:

- Include as an absolute limit to global warming a **global temperature increase not exceeding 2°C** compared with

7 United Nations Foundation (2012): Sustainable Energy for All, New York. <http://www.se4all.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/01/SEFA-Action-Agenda-Final.pdf>

pre-industrial levels, particularly taking into account industrialized nations' responsibility.

- Include in the agenda a **zero net land degradation rate** by 2030.⁸ The right to food and prioritization of local populations' rights and land use must be consistently ensured.
- Establish as a goal the **reduction of the rate of forest loss to 0% by 2020⁹ and the restoration of degraded forests. The use of wood products must be subject to improved certification standards.**
- Include the **prevention of deterioration in water quality** as a commitment in the agenda. Furthermore, a long-term commitment against the introduction of pollutants into water cycles must be achieved. **Water must be recognised as a public good by international law** and the

commercialisation of water should be forbidden.

- Effectively protect the **oceans with their biodiversity and essential resources** for many societies from further over-exploitation by **global industrial fishery policies, depletion, and littering.**
- Significantly expand **conservation areas on land, along coasts, and on the high seas¹⁰** through transparent and participatory processes, taking into account the rights of local populations and including those affected into the development of regional protection goals and regulations.
- Integrate into the post-2015 agenda the **Aichi goals** agreed upon in the Convention on Biological Diversity's Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, including the **Nagoya Protocol¹².**



Deforestation in Port-au-Prince, Haiti

- 8 UNCCD (2012): Zero Net Land Degradation: A Sustainable Development Goal for Rio+20, Bonn. http://www.unccd.int/Lists/SiteDocumentLibrary/Rio+20/UNCCD_PolicyBrief_ZeroNetLandDegradation.pdf
- 9 CBD (2010): COP 10 Decision X/2:X/2. Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, Nagoya. <http://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/?id=12268>
- 10 17% by 2020 on land; 10% by 2020; and 20% by 2030 on the seas. CBD (2010): COP 10 Decision X/2. Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, Nagoya. <http://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/?id=12268>
- 11 CBD (2010): COP 10 Decision X/2:X/2. Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020, Nagoya. <http://www.cbd.int/decision/cop/?id=12268>
- 12 CBD (2011): Nagoya Protocol on Access to Genetic Resources and the Fair and Equitable Sharing of Benefits arising from their Utilization to the Convention on Biological Diversity, Nagoya. <http://www.cbd.int/abs/doc/protocol/nagoya-protocol-en.pdf>



Mongolian Farmer inspecting sea buckthorn

4. Food Sovereignty and the Eradication of Hunger

Today, 842 million people throughout the world still suffer from hunger; more than half of these are female and two thirds live in rural areas. Among the key factors behind this situation are the lack of access to land, resources, and markets, as well as economic practices such as food speculation, industrial livestock farming, land-grabbing, the use of food crops to produce biofuels, and misguided agricultural policy. Even in rich countries, poverty frequently leads to undernourishment and malnutrition. Industrialised agriculture moreover compromises natural resources through over-fertilisation and its heavy reliance on pesticides.

During the negotiations for a post-2015 agenda, we therefore call on the German government to commit itself to:

- **Reduce the number of people suffering from hunger to zero by 2030 and make the implementation of the right to food** a key element within the new agenda. This goal must be based on just and equal access to sufficient, safe,

affordable, nourishing, and culturally appropriate food based on resources that are available to both current and future generations.

- Ensure that the **creation and expansion of socially and ecologically sustainable agriculture** is promoted and written into the new agenda. This must explicitly support small-scale producers and globally strengthen local structures of distribution and consumption.
- Include the **protection of producers in the countries of the Global South from dumping.**
- Ensure that **financial speculation conducive to food price rises is made illegal.**
- Include the creation of instruments to **protect land rights** that effectively prevent land and water grabbing, as well as the introduction of binding corporate accountability regulations. Implement the UN Food and Agriculture Organization's (FAO) Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries, and Forests.

5. Include Responsible Governance and Global Governance

A new global agenda must include reforms leading to a coherent, democratic, and inclusive system of global governance. International organisations and alliances such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Bank, G20, and Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) must orientate their future activities towards and publicly account for the achievement of the SDGs. At the national level, democracy and the rule of law need to be strengthened and corruption and mismanagement to be tackled.

During the negotiations for a post-2015 agenda, we therefore call on the German government to commit itself to:

- Include **the achievement and strengthening of democracy and the rule of law** through transparent, accountable, and capable political institutions, as well as comprehensive social and political participation in all countries.
- Establish **fair and equal access of all groups in society to an independent and efficient judiciary.**
- Clearly stipulate that **states, international institutions, and private actors can and will be held accountable** and made responsible for any violation of international standards.
- Firmly establish the **fight against bribery and corruption** in all areas at the national, international, and transnational levels.
- Include and **guarantee substantial civil society participation** at both the national and international level during the SDG negotiation and implementation.
- Ensure that **the UN, as a forum of universal legitimacy, is awarded a key role** in the entire SDG process and that democratic international structures are strengthened.

Polling Station in Kabul during the presidential and provincial council election, April 2014





Household waste in Germany

6. Peace and Security

Peace and security for all people are a sine qua non for development. Ending wars, and the prevention of violent conflict must become a top global policy priority. The impact of climate change and environmental degradation on habitats and natural resources can lead to or intensify conflicts and violent struggles.

During the negotiations for a post-2015 agenda, we therefore call on the German government to commit itself to:

- Include the goal of **eliminating the causes of violent conflicts, ending violent conflicts** peacefully, preventing crises, and promoting conflict resolution by civil means, as well as strengthening the instruments, procedures, and institutions for such an approach as central elements of the new agenda.
- Establish a **limit and a gradual reduction of global arms exports**, in particular to countries with a record of systematic human rights abuses, as a goal within the new framework.
- Integrate the contents of **UN resolution 1325 on women, peace, and security** and formulate the goal to end sexualised and other forms of violence against women and girls into the new agenda.
- Include the **struggle against human trafficking and the illegal trade of drugs and arms** within the agenda.
- Include the goal of **reducing the risks faced by and strengthening the resilience of particularly vulnerable groups**, such as the poor, children, women, the elderly, and people with disabilities during **disasters** in the agenda.

7. Sustainable Economic Practices

Humanity is living beyond its means and has created an extremely unequal distribution of resource use. While rich nations consume and squander more than their fair share of resources, poor nations face scarcity. Respecting planetary boundaries through sustainable economic practices, a responsible use of resources, and sustainable patterns of production and consumption must become part of the new agenda and be applied to all nations, including those of the Global North. The current concept of growth, a development model linked to growth, as well as the dominant modes of production and consumption are destroying the basis for life and compromising any form of sustainable development at the expense of current and future generations.

During the negotiations for a post-2015 agenda, we therefore call on the German government to commit itself to:

- Direct the agenda to an **encompassing transformation towards a sustainable economy based on sufficiency and efficiency and that respects precautionary measures**. This includes the global implementation of permanent resource recycling, which encourages products to be designed and manufactured following principles of thriftiness, efficiency, longevity, re-usability, and recycling.
- Develop alternative instruments to measure wealth and development beyond Gross Domestic Product (GDP) that are capable of **internalising all costs currently considered external ecological and social costs**.
- Put an **immediate end to subsidies detrimental to the environment and development and destructive for existing structures**. Agricultural subsidies should be subject to ecological and social conditions.



Construction worker in Dhaka, Bangladesh

- Establish **binding transparency and due diligence regulations** for **human rights** and **social and ecological standards**. Equally, the implementation of the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights needs to be anchored within the agenda.
- Implement a **tax reform** by 2030 leading to a higher taxation of environmental and resource consumption.
- Reform the **global trade system** in a way that is supportive of such a transformation and takes into account the interests of developing countries. For these nations, an option of an **asymmetric opening of markets**, which takes into account the needs of the poorest and least developed nations, and binding it to clearly defined human rights and environmental criteria must be included in the agenda.
- Establish the creation of a **just and transparent global economic and financial system** as a goal within the new global agenda. This must include creating **transparent international financial markets**, limiting financial speculation (i.e. derivatives trading), banning illegal financial transactions, as well as the tracing of assets stemming from criminal activities. Furthermore, a **just and transparent tax system** needs to be established to stop tax evasion and avoidance and to close tax havens.

8. Fair Implementation – Ensure Sufficient Development and Sustainability Financing and Create Innovative Financing

To implement this global agenda, all involved actors will have to carry their fair share of the burden and sufficient financial means will be required. In the likely disputes over how to finance these measures, the costs related to not acting (or not paying) also need to be considered since these costs will be far higher in the long run. The details of financing these measures can be found in a separate framework agreement and should be developed and communicated through a participatory and transparent process.

During the negotiations for a post-2015 agenda, we therefore call on the German government to commit itself to:

- Apply the principle of **common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR)** for the implementation of the post-2015 agenda, ensuring all countries take on a fair and adequate share as well as the responsibility for the success of the agenda. In addition to the countries of the Global North, the emerging economies will play a particularly important role here.
- Ensure that previous commitments by countries of the Global North, such as committing at least **0.7% of GDP to financing development**, are reaffirmed.
- Include a **viable and broad financing strategy for the global agenda** and ensure that compliance with this strategy is regularly controlled by transparent mechanisms. In



addition to public funding, the implementation of the agenda will require a promotion of transparency and the taxation of financial markets, measures against capital flight, and limits on financial speculation. Furthermore, to mobilise their own financial resources, individual states will require support. With regard to private financing for the new agenda, accountability and efficiency will need to be secured. Private financing must not be allowed to become an excuse for state actors to retreat from their responsibility.

- Award **innovative financing instruments** a prominent role within the new agenda and include measures such as a global financial transaction tax, a levy on shipping and flights, or the taxation of resource use.
- Promote the **creation of an independent and transparent insolvency framework for states**.
- **Include development and climate financing as two separate items** in a financial framework agreement so as to capture the amount spent on climate protection as a separate item.
- Make all **international organisations, forums and alliances**, from the international financial institutions to the EU and OECD up to the Group of Seven/Eight (G7/G8) and the G20, responsible for SDG implementation. It should no longer be possible for them to implement programmes and policies that contradict these goals. Furthermore, they have to be held accountable for their efforts.

Outlook

Lasting poverty and injustice, increasing environmental deterioration, human rights violations, and discrimination are issues that concern us all. That is why the post-2015 agenda must be equally applicable for the Global South and the Global North. We call on Germany to assume its responsibility in the implementation of the agenda both internationally and nationally.

The elements described above are what we consider to be key aspects of a new agenda. The implementation of this agenda must become a political priority and cannot be allowed to fail due to short-term political thinking, a lack of political will, disputes about matters of competencies, or a refusal to provide the required financing. As a central system of new goals, the post-2015 agenda must incorporate all policy fields for we have a common but differentiated responsibility to create a decent life for all and respect planetary boundaries.

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VENRO is the German umbrella organisation for non-governmental organisations (NGOs) focusing on development policy. It consists of around 120 organisations from private and church-related development cooperation, humanitarian aid, and development policy education, public relations and advocacy.

VENRO represents the interests of NGOs focusing on development and humanitarian issues at the political level, raises public awareness of development policy and develops standards for quality and transparency.

www.venro.org

‘Your voice against poverty – development needs participation’

The VENRO project ‘Your voice against poverty’ encourages debate about sustainable development. The aim of the project is to develop a sustainable understanding of development together with other social actors and anchor this understanding within politics and society. The project organises nationwide campaigns that are particularly intended to motivate young people to actively support the implementation of development goals. Further important aspects of the VENRO project include providing information and promoting dialogue.

‘Your voice against poverty’ is the German platform of the international alliance ‘Global Call to Action Against Poverty’ (GCAP). This alliance consists of charities and other non-profit organisations, but also celebrities and millions of people in more than 100 countries who are campaigning for an end to poverty.

www.deine-stimme-gegen-armut.de

The **German NGO Forum on Environment and Development** (Forum Umwelt und Entwicklung) was founded in 1992 after the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development and coordinates the activities of German NGOs in international policy processes on sustainable development.

It is legally represented by the German League for Nature, Animal Protection and Environment DNR, the umbrella organisation of German nature conservation, and animal and environmental protection associations.

<http://www.forumue.de>