

Excellencies,

Dear Michael Stich,

Ladies & gentlemen,

Dear Friends,

I am delighted to be here today to receive this prestigious prize. I have followed your work for a long time and I admire your initiative.

In response to your question, Michael, I would like to reply that for quite some time I have been involved in challenges of my own, albeit different from Olympic competition, but equally as passionate and rewarding.

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As you are aware, the goal that I have pursued through my own sporting activities has been to think of others rather than beat them.

This Prize recognises several years of commitment across the world. Far from resting on the laurels of a one-off performance, it acts as an incentive to redouble my efforts. I believe my continuing mission in the service of others to be a pressing duty.

For over twenty years, your projects and methods have won respect from all those fighting to preserve our planet, through the ideas and solutions you have raised.

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When BAUM was launched a quarter of a century ago, the urgency of our ecological situation was not a particularly widely held belief, in particular by companies with other priorities. Therefore your determination and your inventiveness are all the more remarkable. Your achievements are priceless.

Fortunately, things have moved on since then. With the Copenhagen summit just a few days away, the importance of environmental issues is firmly on the global agenda.

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Today everyone knows that our planet will not be able to cope with growth, so costly in terms of natural resources, indefinitely. Everyone is aware of the toll of global warming on our natural landscapes and species. Everyone suspects that its effect will be even more dramatic for certain populations. I believe that everyone is starting to understand that to leave our children a preserved world, exceptional efforts will have to be made.

In spite of these signs, which I find extremely encouraging, and in spite of unprecedented scientific and political mobilisation, we are, unfortunately, witnessing preparations for the Copenhagen summit that are failing to live up to our legitimate expectations. .../...

As the world reels from the shock of a major economic and financial crisis, countries are finding it difficult to commit financial efforts on the scale that the problem demands. The developed economies are often deep in debt. The developing countries lack adequate resources and often have other emergencies to attend to. They also have the feeling that the effort should first of all be made by those that, to a certain extent, have built their prosperity by pillaging the planet over the past two centuries.

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Naturally, it is not all doom and gloom in the run up to the great meeting in Copenhagen. It is noteworthy that major progress has been achieved by leading powers in the area of CO₂ emissions.

I am mindful of Germany, where a new green economy is blossoming, fostering growth which is both sustainable and prosperous. Thanks to a highly audacious series of measures implemented since the 2000 EEG law, savings of 110 million tonnes of CO₂ per annum in your country, the creation of 250 000 jobs in the field of renewable energies, Germany is on track for a daring, effective commitment which stimulates rather than penalises economic activity.

.../...

I am also mindful of the intentions formulated by China to prevent global warming through massive investment in alternative energies. This determination, clearly stated by the Chinese premier in September at the United Nations General Meeting on climate in New York, is without doubt some of the best news in recent years.

I am also mindful of the United States of America and President Obama, who has made a resolutely clear commitment to this dossier.

Last but not least I am mindful of the European Union which, under the impetus of numerous countries, including Germany, naturally, has recently demonstrated frank determination on this subject. .../...

However shared goodwill does not always suffice and such commitments must produce concrete results.

The run-up to Copenhagen, although useful in terms of raising public awareness, highlights the undisputed role of the States and multilateral organisations faced with issues on a planetary scale, determined by major economic interests and associated with global geostrategic balances.

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Faced with the scale of future upheavals, the States will be unable to achieve everything on their own. Setting carbon emissions quotas is certainly necessary but such a measure will not replace the changes that each and every one of us needs to make in terms of our lifestyle, the way in which we travel, consume, produce. Changes which go beyond gradually replacing polluting energies with clean energies and will be achieved by redefining our very relationship with energy, the way in which we live with our world, with our fellow people.

The first victims of an ailing environment are always the most vulnerable, those that pay the price of growth and prosperity. .../...

Therefore, we must act for them. Not only does our dignity as human beings depend on it, it is also in our interest.

We must understand the historic importance of the times in which we live. We have a unique opportunity to build a more responsible world that enjoys greater solidarity. In short, a world which is more sustainable.

It is for this reason that now, more than ever before, we need to harness the mass of goodwill - now its surest strength - that has always been at the heart of environmental mobilisation. At a time when international negotiations are struggling to come up with solutions, we need to act and mobilise. .../...

This has been the thrust of your work which, for a quarter of a century, has been based on the sense of responsibility and initiative of all those involved, regardless of size, skills, abilities.

It is also the spirit that drives my Foundation:
getting people, institutions, companies to work together through
a variety of means. Acting on levels which are sometimes
modest, sometimes more important, but always with the firm
conviction that each gesture is useful in terms of its direct
impact and the mobilisation that it inspires.

.../...

Sometimes, all it takes is a simple innovative idea to achieve essential progress. I am mindful for example of the Desertec project initiated in your country, whose progress my Foundation is following with great interest, which could have a major impact in the future.

The harnessing of our non-depletable solar resource by the Desertec consortium could thus open up considerable prospects, both in terms of supplying clean energy and development in Saharan African countries.

.../...

Although it is just one example, it nevertheless proves that significant progress is within reach of us all, provided that we demonstrate the spirit of innovation, audacity and determination.

I know that I can count on you to help this ambition become a reality.

I know that I can count on Germany, whose successive governments and civilian society have been consistently exemplary in their commitment to the environment.

.../...

At a time when we need to invent a new way of living, I have no doubt that Germany will rise to the challenge once again.

Thank you very much.