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Chargé d’Affaires, Embassy of Germany
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Mr. Hamilton,

Ladies and Gentlemen:

It is my pleasure to welcome you here today, together with Lee Hamilton and the Woodrow Wilson Center, for the opening of the exhibition *Environment, Conflict, and Cooperation*.

Let me be straightforward: What you will see here will not make you feel good. But it is of paramount importance. This exhibition shows how man-made environmental changes will affect our foreign and security policy. Crises that are exacerbated or even caused by environmental destruction will increasingly dominate the international agenda.

Ladies and Gentlemen, most of you will know the latest report by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) or the Stern Review. Both reports make clear that the economic, social, and political consequences of climate change are indeed grave. I don’t want to paint a gloomy picture, but we should not fool ourselves: Climate change will alter all our lives. Rain patterns will change and, with that, the availability of potable water and usable agricultural land. The number of extreme weather events will increase; cities and entire regions could be rendered uninhabitable. Migration movements will be the result. This exhibition before us demonstrates through striking examples how human-made environmental changes can affect human coexistence.

Ladies and Gentlemen, it is clear that, in light of the unprecedented challenge we are confronted with, traditional patterns of behavior are failing. Short-term fixes are no remedy. We can only meet this challenge if we adapt our lifestyles and change the patterns of our economic behavior. And we must draw the consequences from the fact that we live in a global village where neighbors have to rely on each other. That is why environmental cooperation, above all climate protection, is so important to long-term conflict prevention.

With this in mind, some weeks ago the heads of state and government of the EU adopted what I believe is a landmark resolution which will guide future EU climate and energy policy. The EU is acknowledging the special responsibility of the industrialized nations to reduce the emissions responsible for climate change. But the resolution also candidly states that, since 85 percent of the world’s emissions are created outside the EU, it will also critically depend on whether others join in pursuing the European policy. We know that we can prevent further global warming only through joint, decisive action. We have taken the first step in that direction. We hope that as many of our partners as possible will soon join us.

Ladies and Gentlemen, I hope this exhibition helps ever more people to recognize the connections between environmental changes, conflict, and cooperation. I therefore hope that as many visitors as possible stop by in the next two weeks and learn more about this issue.

In closing, I would like to thank the organizations, sponsors, and, in particular, you, Mr. Hamilton, and the staff of the Woodrow Wilson Center for bringing this important exhibition to Washington together with us. Thank you.