

Short report

25th Anniversary of the Development and Peace Foundation (SEF)

Visionary Thinking for Global Governance

Celebration in Berlin

24 November 2011

Bärensaal, Altes Stadthaus

Sabine Gerhardt, November 2011



This year marks the 25th anniversary of the founding of the Development and Peace Foundation (SEF) on the initiative of former German Chancellor and Nobel Peace Prize laureate Willy Brandt. The key impetus for its founding was provided by Brandt's work as Chairman of the North-South Commission, whose report – entitled North-South: A Program for Survival and published in 1980 – set out a vision for partnership between North and South. The Brandt Report highlighted the interests common to all people and nations, and called for a new definition of North-South relations and the globalisation of politics. The world has changed a great deal since then. When the Cold War ended in 1989/90, many people hoped that a fairer and more peaceful world was now within reach. This hope is reignited by the dramatic events now taking place in the Middle East. So to mark its 25th anniversary, the SEF held a celebration in Berlin on 24 November 2011, when Brandt's visions were discussed in the context of new challenges.

The impetus for the founding of the SEF 25 years ago came in 1985, when Willy Brandt was honoured in New York for his commitment to the Third World. Opening the celebration in Berlin, Karin Kortmann, Chairperson of the Executive Committee of the Development and Peace Foundation (SEF), recalled that it took just one year for the project to come to fruition, with the SEF being formally established in 1986 with support from eminent academics and politicians, including Kurt Biedenkopf, Ralf Dahrendorf, Uwe Holtz and Dieter Senghaas. A vital contribution came from Johannes Rau, then Minister-President of North Rhine-Westphalia, who was able to secure funding for the SEF from this federal state. Anke Brunn, NRW's Minister for Science and Research at that time, reminded the audience of Johannes Rau's unswerving commitment to the creation of a just and peaceful world. Indeed, it was Johannes Rau who summed up the essence of the SEF's mandate with the neat phrase: „Political action based on global responsibility“

An enduring vision

The aim was to establish the SEF as an independent, cross-party forum which would explore global interdependencies and recommend effective policy action in response to the realities of a globalised world: “We are united by the vision of a world without borders and without prejudice, without hunger or fear of destruction. We know that this vision will not become a reality today or tomorrow. But we wish to commit ourselves to making our way, step by step, towards that goal. The future of humankind depends on regarding ourselves as world citizens and on our acting with a sense of global responsibility.” This vision, espoused by the founding Executive Committee, continues to inspire the Executive Committee today, said Kortmann.

She also recalled the cooperation agreement signed by Willy Brandt, as Chairman of the SEF's Executive Committee, and the Rector of the University of Duisburg in January 1991. This laid the foundation stone for the strong and enduring partnership with the Institute for Development and Peace (INEF). On 1 July 1993, the SEF – previously a registered association – became a non-profit-making incorporated foundation under civil law; this change of status was intended to increase the SEF's effectiveness. In addition to North Rhine-Westphalia, Berlin, Brandenburg, and Saxony were now also donor states.

Dr Angelica Schwall-Düren, NRW's Minister for Federal Affairs, Europe and the Media, underlined the SEF's good working relations with its donor states. In her speech at the celebration event, the Minister pledged NRW's continued support for the SEF in future. Professor Bernhard Vogel, Chairman of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation,

also paid tribute to the positive working relationship with the SEF. Although not a supporter of Willy Brandt as Chancellor, “I take my hat off to Brandt’s tireless commitment to the vision of ‘one world,’” he said.

“Organise the World!”

When the Cold War and the East-West conflict ended in 1989/90, Kortmann continued, many people hoped that a fairer and more peaceful world was now within reach. Willy Brandt was among those who saw this as an historic opportunity. At his initiative, the Commission on Global Governance was established in 1992; its report – entitled *Our Global Neighbourhood* – was published by the SEF in German in 1995. One of the greatest achievements of the SEF and the INEF, said Professor Franz Nuscheler, Director of the Institute for Development and Peace (INEF) for many years, was that it established the concept of global governance in both the political and the academic debate in Germany. What’s more, the SEF and INEF have developed the concept further and have translated the peace policy perspective into political and strategic – in other words, operationally relevant – guidelines for political praxis, according to Professor Dieter Senghaas, Chairman of the SEF’s Advisory Board since its founding, whose words of welcome focused on the substance of the SEF’s work.

Professor Senghaas reminded the audience that the fundamental problem facing the world today is no different from the issue which preoccupied the now largely forgotten Nobel Peace Prize laureate Alfred Hermann Fried in the late 19th and early 20th century. Fried, said Senghaas, was a tireless advocate for a “new world order” as the institutional structure to safeguard a durable and lasting world peace. With his rallying cry “Organise the world!”, Fried worked for the establishment of an international organisation as an overarching framework spanning various policy fields, transcending but also actively involving the world’s countries. This type of governance regime is still needed in many different fields, Senghaas concluded. In the ensuing discussion, Gernot Erler, Deputy Chair of the SPD parliamentary group in the German Bundestag, underscored these ideas with various examples drawn from his own experience as a Minister of State in the Federal Foreign Office from 2005 to 2009.

Development – Peace – Climate Change

One of the greatest challenges facing the world today is climate change. This was the main theme of the speech by Professor Felix Ekardt. Climate change and energy and resource scarcity are key factors influencing world peace and social justice. Mitigating climate change is a major challenge for the international community, but there may also be scope to devise common solutions to poverty, peace and climate change. However, Ekardt emphasised that this would require policy-makers and society at large to pull together. Synergies between social learning and progress on global governance are essential for halting climate change.