



Press Release

UN official appeals to German Government for better support in Bonn

Bonn, 13 June 2000 – The head of the UN Climate Change Secretariat, which moved to Bonn in 1996, appealed today to the Federal Government of Germany to better integrate the United Nations, its staff and their families into the host country and to provide adequate office accommodation.

Addressing this week's climate change talks, which are being attended by some 1,700 participants from 153 countries, Executive Secretary Michael Zammit Cutajar thanked the City of Bonn and a number of federal ministries, in particular the Federal Environment Ministry, for their efforts.

"We appreciate the efforts being made, but we are still short of a fully satisfactory situation," said Mr. Zammit Cutajar. "I believe that the essence of the problem is that our presence and status as guests in Germany are still not fully perceived in all parts of the host Government."

He highlighted that diplomats from foreign countries run into difficulties in obtaining visas before departure from their home country to enter Germany to attend UN meetings in Bonn.

He also pointed to the problem of office facilities, noting the absence of an over-arching decision-making process and agreed plans and budgets for ensuring adequate space for the various UN offices here. In the case of the Climate Change Secretariat, the growth of activities in Bonn will shortly force it to operate out of two different locations, with the risk of undermining its cohesion and effectiveness at a very crucial time in the negotiating process.

He recognized the value of the proposal to convert the parliamentary area into a new "UN House in Bonn". Remarking that this will take at least five years to achieve, he appealed to the German Government to find an interim solution that would permit the Climate Change Secretariat to be reunited.

"Satisfactory arrangements on all these fronts are necessary if Germany is to succeed in its aim of making Bonn a competitive United Nations centre," he said.

Mr. Zammit Cutajar urged the Government to learn from the best practices of established UN centres such as Geneva, Nairobi, New York, and Vienna and to build the proper juridical framework for the life and work of the United Nations in Germany.

"I believe that these matters should be taken up by the Government as a whole," concluded Mr. Zammit Cutajar. "Both Chancellors Kohl and Schroeder committed their governments to support the United Nations presence in Bonn. All Ministries share this responsibility. I trust that a coordinated and adequate response will be forthcoming."

Note to journalists: For further information, please call the press office at 0228-9024-390 or 380.