

Translation

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The questions were posed by Sandra Koch, a trainee from Mainz.

Federal Chancellor, you have invited experts from all over the world to Berlin for the first International German Forum this coming Wednesday. Why? What is the idea behind it?

Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel:

The idea stems from my civic dialogue sessions with the general public and with experts in 2011 and 2012. At that time the view was that we shouldn't just stew in our own juice but should look further afield to see what is going on elsewhere. One factor is that many countries throughout the world are interested in Germany. Another point is that things are happening in many countries to which we may not be paying enough attention. That is why many of those who participated in this civic dialogue were keen to establish a forum for global learning. This will be one of the first events in this series.

"What is important to people – quality of life and progress" – that is the theme of the German Forum. What do you consider particularly important in this context?

Well, I have to say that we spent many years simply focusing on economic growth. But now we can see that that in itself isn't really enough to ensure a good quality of life. That is why people in many areas are now debating what is really the essence of quality of life. To some extent this is an individual question, but it is also an issue of social cohesion. The German Bundestag's Study Commission has therefore also been working on this subject for an entire legislative period. But the topic is also providing a lot of food for thought on an international scale. That is why we have invited experts to give us some more information on this issue of quality of life. For example, in some countries, people are thinking about how many individuals they really know who would help them if they were in a very bad way healthwise, and who would look after them. That, of course, is a question that has a very strong bearing on my wellbeing, just as much as material prosperity. And that is the sort of question we are considering.

So, as you just said, the conference will focus on very central issues of personal happiness as well as social prosperity. Are those not very big issues for a one-day event?

That's true. An event like this can only start the ball rolling and spark ideas. And then we can build on that. The idea is that it will become a regular event. It is also something we can't simply decide just by passing laws but which needs to be debated in a broad public forum. That is why this is part of a wide public discussion – I mentioned the Study Commission – and it will no doubt be discussed further in many other areas of society.

You are expecting guests from all over the world, from industrialized countries such as Germany but also from emerging economies and developing countries. Don't people in Germany, Brazil and Nigeria have totally different concerns?

At the end of the day, I think that above all the dignity of each individual person is indivisible and inviolable, as our Basic Law states. Of course people have different concerns. But we all have the same challenges to overcome. We have to join forces to tackle climate change and prevent the further rise of global warming. We know that poor living conditions in Africa and Latin America can cause large numbers of people to leave their homes. We know that drug consumption in developed countries such as America and in Europe has disastrous consequences, also in the countries where the drugs originate. In other words, the world is interconnected. And in the coming years and even today we can only be happy and enjoy living in the world when we also know what is going on in the world.

The first German Forum will take place on Wednesday. This video podcast is the 300th of its kind. When you launched them almost seven years ago, you were regarded as a pioneer. What does the weekly podcast mean for you these days?

It always offers a glimpse of the coming week and is thus also an invitation to viewers to perhaps get ready for what is in store and maybe to take a closer look at what is going on. I know that many also perceive it as a form of recognition. For example, when I visit social institutions, when I visit certain associations, when I draw attention to particular anniversaries, the social group concerned always considers it a form of recognition for their work. And of course, I have had the chance to get to know many young people who do work experience with us, just as you are interviewing me today, who are involved in other fields and with whom I have the opportunity to chat for a bit, thanks to this video podcast.