

Wadlow, René (2011): Message of Greeting to the Annual Association of World Citizens-Germany Meeting.

Dear Ingrid and Klaus, Dear Friends;

I would like to send through you my best wishes for the annual Association of World Citizens-Germany meeting. You are dealing with timely and important issues, and I will be very interested in reading the report of the presentations and discussions.

We are all living at a time when world events show us that, as responsible world citizens, we must cooperate together. We see from the financial and economic difficulties that efforts to regulate and harmonize economic policies and rules must take the world dimension into consideration. Even a broad and powerful grouping of States such as the European Union can not deal adequately with all aspects. The policies of the USA, China, the energy production of Russia — all have an impact on what happens here in Europe.

Citizens of the world — as our name proclaims — have stressed the world dimension of issues and the need to have a world vision as we deal with such issues as food security, ecologically-sound development, global warming and military issues. We need to be active and responsible citizens at the local, the national and the world level. There are institutions — local assemblies, national parliaments — which allow us to be represented at the local and national levels. We can try to make our views known at the local and national level, and we know to whom to address our ideas. The impact of our ideas at the local and national level is often small, but, at least, we know who our elected representatives are.

At the world level, such structures are not yet in place — although there is an important start in the non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in consultative status. Our role is often to call attention to the world dimension of issues — be it human rights, refugees, food policy, equality between women and men. Consultative status gives us legitimacy and the opportunity to deal with all States — not just those of which we are national citizens.

Thus, the AWC representation to the United Nations in Vienna, New York and Geneva is a key factor in our work. As a priority, we must strengthen this work with the United Nations. I know from experience that government representatives appreciate our efforts to take a broader view of issues but also to listen to what the representatives of national governments have to say. Thus, although I have been publicly critical of many of the policies and practices of the Government of Sudan, the Sudanese government asked AWC to be observers of the referendum held in southern Sudan in January 2011 — a referendum which led this July to the independence of South Sudan. As I am 77, the Sudanese government did not want to see me on dusty paths in southern Sudan, so I helped to put together a team of

four younger world citizens from Geneva to go. I know that their observations were taken seriously. They were interviewed for the Sudanese television, and we continue to follow the difficult situation in both Sudanese States.

My priorities are to strengthen work toward UN bodies in Vienna, New York and Geneva and to ask for consultative status with UNESCO as we have active members in Paris and understanding among cultures is one of our aims.

Both as an organization and as individual world citizens in the broad world situation, there is much work to do. The vision and energy must come from within each of us, but cooperatively together, I believe that we can have a real impact.

Our consultative status with the United Nations allows us to play a role in UN-sponsored conferences, both during the preparatory phase and during the conferences as well. The next major conference is of particular interest to us as it deals with ecologically-sound development, efforts to overcome persistent poverty, and more broadly the relations between humans and Nature. This will be the next Earth Summit in Rio. I know that these issues are close to many of you, and your active sharing of ideas with the German national authorities preparing for the conference as well as with the European Union and with NGOs is an important contribution to awareness-building. Thus I add a recent presentation of the themes of the Conference.

Again, all my best wishes for your meetings,

Rene Wadlow