

Welcoming Address at the Graduation Ceremony of the Master's Programme Land Management and Land Tenure 22nd March 2010

***Christian J. Hegemer, Director Institute for International Contact and Co-operation,
Hanns Seidel Foundation***

Senator Hess,
Director, Prof. Dr. Magel,
Vice Dean, Prof. Dr. Stilla,
Mr. Zimmerman,
Mr. Espinoza,
Mr. Richter,
Honoured and rewarded guests, graduates, families and friends.

I am honoured to speak on this auspicious occasion.

I am privileged to celebrate your academic success as graduates of the Master's Programme "Land Management and Land Tenure" at the Technical University Munich, which ranks among the first three German Universities certified as "centres of academic excellence". In producing several Nobel Laureates within the past years, it moreover counts as a world-wide renowned research centre.

Over the course of the very challenging three-semester Master's programme that you have accomplished, you have proven "head, heart and hand" (Pestalozzi) for hard work. The training you have received and expertise gained in the field of Land Management give you special status, and adequate responsibilities. That is your privilege, as well as your burden:

The conflict between man and land grows. In view of the current global crisis with its dramatic developments in the social, financial and environmental sectors, a profound transformation of managing land and natural resources seems imminent. Land is the very vital basis of our livelihoods. Ever since we recall time, natural land resources have provided manhood with sustenance. Land is the essential driving force behind our existence.

In this sense, the educational, interpersonal and intercultural experience you have gained during your studies in Munich will be of great value to your home countries and will definitely influence our future. You shall have the unique opportunity to construct a more sustainable rural development in your home countries and to contribute in creating a more equal and fair world and a life worth living for future generations.

I am very proud of being affiliated to this challenging and noble goal. For many years the Hanns Seidel Foundation has been a regular sponsor for students from abroad who participated in the Master's Programme in "Land Management and Land Tenure". This year once again, we are very pleased to congratulate other three graduates from China and Mongolia sponsored by us.

The Technical University of Munich has been closely co-operating with the Hanns Seidel Foundation in the field of land development for many years with projects in Korea, Mongolia, China and Egypt. At this point I would like to express my sincere gratitude to Prof. Holger Magel for making this co-operation possible. He has proven to be a congenial partner, being

challenging and demanding. Due to his extraordinary work in developing a model village for urban and rural development in China over 20 years ago, an outstanding collaboration between the Technical University Munich, the Chinese Ministry for Land and Resources and the Hanns Seidel Foundation came into existence. These three institutions established a successful network in the triangle of excellence.

At that time rural China faced serious challenges. Despite the attempts of the post-Mao reforms to overcome the misery, the country was confronted with an alarming social discrepancy. Rural poverty was re-emerging and migrant workers pressed for recognition of their equal rights.

Prof. Magel and his core research staff travelled to a village called Nan Zhang Lou in Shandong province, partner region of Bavaria since 1987. Their goal was revolutionary: the implementation of an *integrated* rural development with *civic participation*.

The result was sensational: new jobs were created, emigration to the cities was reduced, the brain drain slowed down, infrastructure and water management were improved. Furthermore, the Chinese government officially declared Nan Zhang Lou as a “model village” of urban and rural development. Shortly after, a regional project of rural development was designed based on the experience of Nan Zhang Lou, involving 20 villages and more than 25.000 people.

Twenty years later, in 2008, the mayor of Nan Zhang Lou pointed out that the most valuable achievement of Nan Zhang Lou had been the *civic participation*, which created a local collective identity and drove the villagers to strive for a higher *education*.

Education, dear graduates, is the key to Democracy. *Education* gives us freedom of speech and thought, and the power to improve. In this sense, I congratulate you for what you have already accomplished during your studies, and I encourage you for what you shall accomplish in the future by means of freedom and continuous striving for improvement. As Albert Einstein said, “learn from yesterday, live for today, hope for tomorrow. The important thing is not to stop questioning”.

Thank you for your attention.