Dresden Nexus Conference 2020: Urgent Societal Questions Cannot Wait

Saturday 6 June, 2020

How can the sustainable use of environmental resources be better achieved through principles of the circular economy and what role does the Nexus Approach play? This question moves many all over the world. From 3 to 5 June, they discussed questions relating to the topic of “Circular Economy in a Sustainable Society” at the Dresden Nexus Conference (DNC2020). Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, DNC2020 was held entirely in virtual form. This did not dampen the interest: More than 1,000 people from around 100 countries registered for the conference. The eDNC2020 was jointly organised by the United Nations University (UNU?FLORES), the Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development (IOER), and the Technische Universität Dresden (TUD).

Dresden, 5 June 2020. – With the signing of the Declaration of the Dresden Nexus Conference (DNC2020), the third Dresden Nexus Conference ended today. The signatories include the Saxon State Minister of Energy, Climate Protection, Environment and Agriculture, Wolfram Günther, and the three organisers of the DNC2020 – Prof. Edeltraud Guenther, Director of UNU?FLORES, Prof. Marc Wolfram, Director of IOER, and Prof. Lars Bernard, Dean of the Faculty of Environmental Sciences of TUD. Together they want to stimulate a scientific and political debate on core issues of the circular economy. In the declaration, they make clear which thematic priorities are particularly important for the systematic development of new approaches and the transition to a circular economy. In addition to the political debate on the challenges of sustainable development, these include technical, economic, and social issues as well as the integrated management of environmental resources, as envisaged by the Nexus Approach.

From classic conference format to virtual event

Due to the spread of the coronavirus, the organisers were faced with a crucial question at the end of March: Should the conference be postponed by one year or even longer? “We realised soon enough that this was not an option. The societal challenges that we wanted to discuss with people all over the world simply would not allow for any postponement. This urgency may be increased by the pandemic, but crises stimulate innovation,” says Edeltraud Guenther of UNU?FLORES. In just a few weeks, a virtual format was thus developed from the classic on?site conference. “We have to thank everyone involved in DNC2020 – the keynote speakers as well as all conveners and contributors in the 13 sessions and the side events. It is unbelievable with how much commitment everyone contributed to transforming the DNC2020 into a virtual event,” says Lars Bernard from the Technische Universität Dresden.

The five keynote speeches made clear how important it is to face the challenges of a changing world now. They focused on various aspects of the circular economy and the integrated management of environmental resources (Nexus Approach) as well as on the question of how both approaches can contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the United Nations. “It has become very clear that the DNC provides a unique opportunity for an international exchange on the state of the art regarding the Nexus Approach. The conference has once again underlined the crucial relevance of the nexus for shaping just sustainability transformations. Through further deepening inter? and transdisciplinary collaborations, effective support for societal decision making can increasingly be offered at all levels,” says Marc Wolfram from the IOER at the end of the conference.

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The organisers' outlook at the end of the DNC2020 clearly shows: After the conference is before the conference. Science and practice will continue to work together on important challenges regarding the Nexus Approach and questions of circular economy. In the coming weeks and months, the organising institutions of the DNC2020 will be publishing various special issues on topics of the conference. In addition, a photo and video contest on the topic of "Circular Economy in a Sustainable Society" is planned. Those who want to stay informed can subscribe to the DNC newsletter. The next Dresden Nexus Conference will take place in 2022 – probably again on site in Dresden.

Further information

Selected contents of the eDNC2020 are available on the DNC YouTube channel

Link to the DNC Declaration (German)

Link to the conference website of the DNC2020

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