The change in government in Germany in September last year led to new impetus in a number of policy areas. One of these areas was development policy. Though it did not undergo a complete change, development policy revealed significant and visible modifications in order to meet better the challenges on the threshold of the year 2000. In my paper I will give a brief overview of these changes and present the new direction and focus of German development policy in general.

The alleviation of poverty remains the overall goal of German development policy and co-operation. The political context of poverty alleviation, however, is changing by linking it stronger to framework conditions like democracy and good governance, stability and peace between and within nations. "Development policy is peace policy" was a famous phrase of former German social democratic chancellor Willi Brandt. And it is this same phrase that serves as the guiding principle of German development policy at the turn of the century.
The hope that after the end of the cold war world population would move towards peace, stability and welfare turned out to be a fake. As Ambassador Mr. Schramm has already mentioned in his opening statement, we are nowadays facing an unacceptable number of violent conflicts between and even more within countries. The number of externally and internally displaced people and refugees is higher than any time since the World War II. Widespread poverty, uncontrolled growth of population, lack of proper education, socio-economic and politico-cultural deprivation, misgovernance, scramble for scarce and ever degrading natural resources are some of the main causes behind such conflicts. Often, these are being further aggravated by man-made crisis situations. The peaceful settlement – and more important – the prevention of such conflicts have become a strong focus of German development policy. A new instrument for this purpose has been established by the Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development and will be tested in the near future. In the context of its development co-operation with Bangladesh, Germany is carefully monitoring the recently launched peace process in the Chittagong Hill Tracts and is also supporting it with bilateral funds. We seriously urge the two partners in this process to do their utmost in order to bring it to a successful end and pave the way for peaceful and equity-based development for all residents in this region.

The respect, protection and assurance of human rights to each and all people have also gained importance in German development policy. The German Government appreciates the absence of systematic violation of human rights in Bangladesh.
and calls on the Bangladesh Government to continue this policy for all members of its population, in particular to the benefit of women. Assuring human rights for women does not only mean protection against violent repression in public and private life, but comprises basic elements like equal access to sufficient and nutritious food, health and family planning services, education and training, and employment.

One major obstacle to development and hence the alleviation of poverty is corruption. It undermines democracy and the credibility of governments. Corruption is hindering the equal distribution of development achievements and benefits the privileged groups of the society far and foremost at the expense of the poor. The battle against corruption must be fought in all countries. Consequently, Germany has taken appropriate measures to end corruption in its own political and public life. Development policy on its part also has to address this issue of good governance implemented for example through public sector reforms and strengthened control systems.

The high indebtedness in many of our partner countries is another crucial factor hindering governments to fulfil their commitments towards social and economic development. Therefore, one of the first development oriented activities of the new German government after taking power last year was the launching of a debt relief initiative at the Cologne Summit of the Group of Seven. But such an initiative can be implemented successfully – that means to the benefit of the poor – only if: 1) financing bi-bilateral and multi-lateral donors
can be secured; and 2) the debt relief is transformed into real poverty reduction and sustainable development. The German Government is enforcing its respective policy measures expecting that also its partner countries would commit themselves accordingly and take appropriate action.

The German Government is aware of the challenges the world is facing at the beginning of the new millennium and it assures its development partners that Germany would further support the development process in a joint and participatory manner within the context of agreed responsibilities and commitments. However, in this time of financial constraints wherein financing of development co-operation is rather on a decrease, all efforts should be strengthened in terms of quality and efficiency.