

**Ministerial Conference: Nature Protection in the Caucasus**  
Promoting Transboundary Cooperation for CBD Implementation  
9-11 March 2006, Berlin – Germany



**Welcome**

Ingrid Matthaeus-Maier, Member of the Board of Managing Directors, KfW Bankengruppe

**Greeting on the occasion of the opening of the  
Ministerial Conference “Nature Protection in the Caucasus –  
Promoting Transboundary Cooperation for CBD Implementation”  
Berlin, 9 March 2006 (10.15 Uhr – 10.21/10.22 Uhr)**

**Frau Ingrid Matthäus-Maier, Management Board Member, KfW Bankengruppe**

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As member of the Board of Managing Directors of KfW Bankengruppe I welcome you warmly to this conference. It is a particular pleasure for us to welcome you, distinguished ministers from Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia, to the premises of KfW in Berlin. I am equally pleased to extend a warm welcome to the delegates of Russia and Iran.

The building in which we have gathered is a place full of history. It was inaugurated at the end of the 19th century and has been used as a bank building ever since. After World War Two this building was the headquarters of the State Bank of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), which was merged into KfW in 1994. During the restoration that followed we took great care to keep the historic character of the building visible.

Since then it has been a branch office of KfW outside Frankfurt am Main. The men and women employed at KfW's Berlin Branch spent a long time working on tasks that originated from the time before the unification of Germany. Now most of the work done here is KfW's core business.

KfW, as the promotional bank of the Federal Republic of Germany, has consisted of five "banks within the bank" since 2004.

- KfW Mittelstandsbank, whose function is to finance small and medium-sized enterprises in Germany
- KfW Förderbank, which supports the German economy in selected sectors such as housing, energy efficiency, infrastructure and education
- KfW IPEX-Bank, which conducts commercial export and project finance
- DEG, which is in charge of equity investments and loans to private enterprises in developing and transition countries, and

- KfW Entwicklungsbank, whose mission is to implement Germany's official Financial Cooperation with developing countries on behalf of the federal government.

KfW has supported financial cooperation projects in the Caucasus since the beginning of the 1990s, and in Turkey for more than 40 years. Our Financial Cooperation with these countries focuses on the long-term financing of social and economic infrastructure and the financial sector. The financing of environmental protection and the conservation of natural resources are important cross-cutting tasks.

In the so-called "green" sector KfW Entwicklungsbank operates in "biodiversity hot spots" in the most varied regions of the world, where the Bank is a leader in the sector dialogue and in programme implementation - for example in various countries of Latin America, particularly Brazil, in the Far East, in southern Africa, Madagascar and Cameroon, as well as in the Caucasus.

The first major conservation project it financed in the Caucasus was the establishment of the "Borjomi-Kharagauli" National Park in Georgia, which it began supporting in 1998 and which has now successfully established itself and can rightly be considered as a model project for the entire region. A guarantee for success was the efficient cooperation with the WWF, with whom we are jointly hosting this conference here today. The successful outcome of the Georgian National Park Programme encouraged us to support the partner countries in developing further projects for the establishment of cross-border conservation areas between Armenia and Georgia as well as in Azerbaijan on the border with Russia. The planning process which was conducted with the parties involved from all countries was evidence that open-minded, objective transboundary dialogue is possible also in the Caucasus region - regardless of the political situation.

So we are very glad that the financing agreements relating to all these new projects were signed in the past months and weeks. This is an important step towards continuing and intensifying our cooperation.

With this step the results so far achieved in our cooperation in the sector demonstrate that KfW will continue to be a good partner to all countries represented here on the basis of its appropriate instruments and the experience it has acquired around the globe.

At the same time, our activities in the Caucasus support the objective of the German government to make regional cooperation projects a reality. If all parties involved respect the politically established framework, this conference will offer new opportunities, not least, for dialogue and continuation of successful cooperation. After all, what is at stake is the preservation of the natural wealth and beauty of the Caucasus for our children and future generations.

And if I may close on this note, as the host of this event I wish all participants a successful and inspiring conference.