
Klaus Toepler



Klaus Töpfer has earned enormous respect, both as a German government minister, handling portfolios such as environmental protection, town planning and construction, and in the international arena as the Executive Director of UNEP, the United Nations Environmental Programme.

After studying economics at the Universities of Mainz, Frankfurt and Munster, he took a position in the state government of Saarland, as the head of the planning department. He lectured at several colleges, while pursuing development projects in Africa, the Middle East and South America.

A member of the CDU party, he was Chairman of the party in Saarland and was a member of the German government from 1990-1998.

Even in the 1970's, Klaus devoted himself to environmental protection, as minister for environment and health in Rheinland-Pfalz. In 1985 he joined the government of Helmut Kohl as Minister for Environment and Reactor Safety.

When the government move from Bonn to Berlin ran into severe problems, his skills in handling a crisis were called for, and in 1994 he became the Minister for Construction and carried specific responsibility for the government move.

At the same time he was a member of the UN commission for development. From 1998 until 2006 he worked as executive director of the UN Environmental Programme based in Kenya and general director of the UN Nairobi office. After retiring from the UN, Töpfer started working as Professor of Environment and Sustainable Development at Tongji University in Shanghai, China.

From 2001 until 2010 Töpfer was a member of the German council for sustainable development (Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung). In 2009 he became founding director of the German Institute for Advanced Sustainability Studies, IASS. In 2010 Töpfer acted as the city of Shanghai's advisor on the topic "future city" for the Expo 2010.

In 2011 the nuclear disaster of Fukushima shook up the world. Consequently, the German government installed the Commission for Assured Energy Supply (Ethikkommission für sichere Energieversorgung) and assigned the chairmanship to Klaus Töpfer.