

Mr. Rainer Hinrichs-Rahlwes, President of the European Renewable Energy Council (EREC); President of the European Renewable Energies Federation (EREF)

Belgium



What event most shaped the course of the global environment?

Mr. HINRICHS-RAHLWES:

I do not believe that any single event had a game changing impact. However, the increasing global consensus—as agreed in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro (Brazil—to strive for sustainable development, and particularly to drastically reduce greenhouse gas emissions definitely is a strong driver for change. Three nuclear catastrophes—in 1979 (Three Mile Island, Pennsylvania, USA), in 1986 (Chernobyl, Ukraine, USSR) and in 2011 (Fukushima Daiichi, Japan) —added to a global understanding that nuclear technology is much too risky to be a sustainable solution. Growing awareness and widespread evidence that renewable energies offer a wide mix of solutions for all types of energy production and consumption certainly helps to start and accelerate the global transformation of our energy supply towards a fully renewables based system.

If we are to meet environmental challenges on a global scale, what one policy initiative do you think would have the most significant impact?

Mr. HINRICHS-RAHLWES: Again, there is no silver bullet. A global consensus, however, implemented by decisive actions to phase out all direct and indirect subsidies for fossil and nuclear energy could significantly increase the speed of a global transformation towards sustainability. Fortunately, phasing out subsidies for unsustainable energies and creating and maintaining stable conditions for smooth take-off of renewables can be implemented by individual countries and even regions or communities. They do not have to wait for a global consensus but can start unilaterally to reap the benefits of renewable energy for economy and ecology.

Given that the public and governmental debates on environmental issues are mired in indecisiveness, what do you think is the most constructive path to achieving active working relationships with all members of society?

Mr. HINRICHS-RAHLWES: The best way to involve society is to offer benefit sharing. Setting up policy frameworks [for] enabling individuals and small and medium companies to produce and consume their own renewable energy will provide immense democratic benefits to those countries deciding to go in this direction. And such policy decisions will have a diversified energy supply and will provide affordable and secure domestic energy. The great thing with renewables is that every country, region, or alliance can develop them by their own decision. Those who do not follow now, will have to catch up later.

BIOGRAPHY

Rainer Hinrichs-Rahlwes is currently the President of the European Renewable Energy Council (EREC), the Brussels-based umbrella organization of the European renewable energy sector. He is also the President of EREC's member association, the European Renewable Energies Federation (EREF), the voice of independent producers of energy from renewable sources, and he is a Board Member and the spokesperson for European and International Affairs of the German Renewable Energy Federation (BEE), the national umbrella organization of the renewable energy sector.

He is closely engaged in European policy development for renewable energies in the European Union as well as in his home country of Germany, and keeps in close contact with government representatives, parliamentarians, the European Commission, and other stakeholders. He is convinced that a complete shift of our energy system to renewable energy is necessary for the sake of energy security and climate protection and that it is technically and economically feasible—much faster and less costly than supporters and beneficiaries of conventional and nuclear energy are trying to make believe.

Rainer Hinrichs-Rahlwes has delivered speeches and presentations and participated in panel discussions all over the world on behalf of the organizations he is representing or advising and as an independent consultant. In this capacity, he provides policy advice and knowledge about sustainable renewable energy development and policies for scaling up renewables on local, national, regional, and global levels in order to facilitate their becoming the mainstream energy sources in the near future.

Representing EREC, he is a member of the Renewable Energy Industry Advisory Board (RIAB) of the International Energy Agency (IEA) and a member of the Steering Committee of the global Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century (REN21) with headquarters in Paris (France), which was founded as an outcome of the first

International Renewable Energy Conference (IREC), the renewables2004 conference in Bonn. He is also a member of the WREN Council, the advisory structure of the World Renewable Energy Network/Congress.

Before engaging with the renewable energy sector in Germany and in Europe, from November 1998 to December 2005, Rainer Hinrichs-Rahlwes was a Director General in the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU), in charge of renewable energies, climate protection and various other dossiers. As a representative of BMU, he was one of the two chairmen of the International Steering Committee preparing the first IREC conference, the renewables2004 in Bonn. After the conference, until he left the ministry at the end of 2005, he served as BMU's representative and a founding co-chair and later a member of the Bureau of the Global Policy Network, now known as REN21.

Rainer Hinrichs-Rahlwes has recently published the book, *Sustainable Energy Policies for Europe: Towards 100% Renewable Energy* (<http://www.crcpress.com/product/isbn/9780415620994>), in which he analyzes and evaluates climate and energy policies in Europe from the first steps of climate and energy policy development via the 2020-targets and provides an outlook for the upcoming discussions and decisions about a policy framework for 2030, including a binding renewable energy target. In his book, he argues that there is no economically or environmentally viable alternative to striving for a complete transition towards a fully renewables-based energy supply.