

# Press Release



September 5<sup>th</sup> 2017, No. 72/2017

## DBU: Trio of Conservationists and Technology Pioneers receive German Environmental Prize

Sielmann/Frobel/Weiger to be honored for "Green Belt", entrepreneurs Oswald for development of efficient special motors on 29 October – Honorary Lifetime Achievement Award to de Brum

**Osnabrück. The conservationists Inge Sielmann (87, of Munich), Dr. Kai Frobel (58, of Nuremberg) and Prof. Dr. Hubert Weiger (70, of Fürth) in the first instance, and the entrepreneurs Bernhard (86) and Johannes Oswald (56, of Miltenberg) in the second, are being awarded the 2017 German Environmental Prize by the German Federal Environmental Foundation (Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt, DBU). The foundation thus honors the committed work by this trio of conservationists on the first and largest pan-German conservation project, the "Green Belt", and by the family business OSWALD Elektromotoren toward the development of an especially energy-efficient electric motor for use in machines such as industrial crushers and presses, which has brought about a revolution in drive engineering. The award, endowed with a financial prize of € 245,000 in each case, will be presented to both prizewinning groups on 29 October in Braunschweig by German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier. The Honorary Lifetime Achievement Award, endowed with € 10,000, goes posthumously to the former Foreign Minister of the Marshall Islands, Tony de Brum who has just passed away at the age of 72.**

*"The stability of System Earth has been strained to its limits"*

"In a world growing ever more complex, we need fundamentally new approaches in technology, research, the economic sphere and society as a whole", stated Assistant DBU-General Secretary Prof. Dr. Werner Wahmhoff today at the announcement of the new recipients of the DBU prizes, which will be presented in 2017 for the 25<sup>th</sup> time by the foundation. The fight for climate protection and conservation, and energy efficiency, are not an end in themselves here. The stability of "System Earth" has been "strained to our planet's limits by us humans," he said. Wahmhoff: "We are the last generation still in a position to make a turnaround, but also the first to suf-

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fer from the massive impacts of global changes. Ultimately we are dealing with the question of how, in the year 2050, some ten billion humans can live well and in harmony with the natural basis of existence.”

*A family business with "great significance for our economic development"*

Regarding the partners and Managing Directors of the Miltenberg company OSWALD Elektromotoren, Johannes and Bernhard Oswald, Wahmhoff described how father and son had significantly raised the energy efficiency and productivity of systems such as industrial crushers and presses, and are thus trailblazers in environmentally-friendly innovation. They were among the first, he asserted, to recognize the feasibility and perspectives of a new technology and to successfully position related products in the market, and thus stand for those small and mid-sized family companies in Germany for whom "our business location is of crucial importance". The company's torque motors reduce energy consumption, in comparison to other mechanical or hydraulic drive solutions, by up to 50 percent, he stated; transmission oil is no longer necessary, the machines are lighter, require less space, produce less operating costs, and are quieter. With their motors, which can be custom-tailored to specific customer requirements, the OSWALD family has become a leader in the world market. In another 21st Century key technology as well, high-temperature superconductor technology, the company is also a leader in development. In addition to the company's commitment, the management is personally active via significant association activities and extraordinary, regional local activism.

*Acquiring a haven for plants and animals thanks to the love of committed friends of nature*

Wahmhoff paid tribute to Inge Sielmann, Honorary Chairperson of the Heinz Sielmann Foundation, Dr. Kai Frobels, Coordinator of the nationwide and internationally active Project Office Green Belt of the Friends of the Earth Germany (Bund für Umwelt und Naturschutz Deutschland, BUND) and Prof. Dr. Hubert Weiger, Chairperson of the BUND, as "Trailblazers for the Green Belt as the first and largest pan-German conservation project". Only thanks to the love of committed friends of nature, as represented by these three, could the approximately 1,400-kilometer-long former inner German border be preserved for the plant and animal world, which has now found a haven within the former 'Death Strip'.

*Vision of a European Initiative for the Green Belt brought to life*

Inge Sielmann, widow of the 2005 DBU Honorary Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, Heinz Sielmann, has resolutely continued her husband's work, and initiated new activity, above all in the area of environmental education. With various initiatives in kindergartens and elementary schools she has set important educational benchmarks in relation to the Green Belt and its significance for the preservation of biological diversity. She has also earned special merit through securing further nature conservation areas

such as the "Biotope Network of Harz-Eichsfeld-Werratal". Frobel is an initiator and "namegiver" of the "Green Belt" and, long before German reunification, helped lay the foundation for the first and largest nationwide pan-German nature conservation project through his groundwork and his contacts to colleagues in the former GDR. His scientific works, as early as the 1970s and 1980s, were seen across Germany as having demonstrated the substantial natural potential and outstanding significance of the border strip. With a major conference including participants from both East and West Germany, he set the metaphorical cornerstone for the Resolution for the Protection of the Green Belt. In 1998 he founded the nationally and internationally active Project Office Green Belt of the BUND association and remains its coordinator today. Weiger promoted the inter-German "people-binding" character of the project and its orientation to dialogue, and -- together with Frobel -- conceived it across the former border between the two Germanies and developed the vision of a European Green Belt. As a member of numerous boards and committees he earned special recognition for the preservation of the one-time border strip and constantly held a "protective, demanding and supportive" hand over it -- even when it was difficult to do so. Wahmhoff: "Through the work of Sielmann, Frobel and Weiger, the vision of a European Initiative for the Green Belt was brought to life in Germany, and a symbol for the surmounting of the Cold War was created."

*"Doing a special service to the planet through a tactful approach with great sensitivity"*

On Tony de Brum, who died two weeks ago, the former Foreign Minister and the posthumous recipient of the DBU Honorary Lifetime Achievement Award, Wahmhoff explained that his personal commitment and diplomatic skill as a dedicated representative of the Pacific island nations were largely responsible for the fact that the 2015 Paris Climate Accords were successfully brought about. This involved the codification by the community of nations of the limitation of human-caused global warming to well under two degrees in comparison to preindustrial levels. He participated decisively in the formation of the "High Ambition Coalition", an alliance of developing-, emerging-, and industrial nations which reached a unified compromise position and thus gave their demands added weight. Above all, De Brum thus gave a voice to the nations and regions which are predicted to be most strongly threatened by the effects of climate change related to the rising sea level and violent storms. Wahmhoff: "With his tactful approach and great sensitivity, he did a great service to the cause of protecting our planet in all of his years of committed work."

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