

# Bauhaus der Erde

## **Bauhaus der Erde gGmbH**

Peschkestrasse 13  
12161 Berlin  
Germany

### **Press Contact**

Dr. Kerstin Humberg  
Interim Managing Director  
presse@bauhausdererde.org  
www.bauhausdererde.org  
M: +49 170 746 9137

## PRESS RELEASE

### **Reconstructing our Climate: A call for a green Bauhaus movement for the 21st century**

On the occasion of Earth Day 2021, the internationally renowned climate researcher Hans Joachim Schellnhuber called for the use of bio-based building materials and presented strategies for a sustainable built environment to the German Federal Press Conference. He announced the launch of the “Bauhaus der Erde” movement as both a driving force for innovation in the construction sector and a “thorn in the flesh” of policymakers. “Without a radical transformation of the built environment, the Paris climate agreement will fail,” said Schellnhuber.

**Berlin, April 21, 2021** – With the news cycle dominated by Covid-19, the earth continues to warm, posing drastic consequences for humanity and global ecosystems. Amazingly, the contribution of the building industry to this crisis has been overlooked in Germany. The reality is that through the construction, operation and demolition of buildings and urban infrastructure, the built environment is responsible for around 40 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions.

“That has to change as quickly as possible,” warned climate researcher Hans Joachim Schellnhuber today at the German Federal Press Conference in Berlin. “If we do not include the built environment in the climate equation, then we have no chance of staying below the two-degree temperature threshold set out in the Paris Agreement”. Together with Prof. Dirk Messner, President of the German Environment Agency (UBA), and architect Prof. Annette Hillebrandt from the Association of German Architects (BDA), Schellnhuber, the founder of

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the Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research, called for a radical transformation of the built environment.

“Where we can replace reinforced concrete with bio-based building materials such as wood or bamboo, we can avoid significant amounts of climate-damaging emissions,” said Schellnhuber. “In addition, we would create a powerful CO<sub>2</sub> sink. With regenerative architecture, we can practically build ourselves out of the climate crisis”. His model calculations show that a single-family home made of solid wood can offset the emissions of 100 return flights from Berlin to New York.

Although the climate researcher has been tackling the climate crisis for decades, it is only in the past years that he has grasped the importance of this key element in the fight against the global crisis. Now he asks himself critically: “How could I have been so blind and simply overlook this elephant in the climate room?”

Today Schnellhuber announced the launch of the “Bauhaus der Erde”. Together with Messner, Hillebrandt and 20 leading experts and with funding from Laudes Foundation, Schnellhuber has founded this initiative to catalyse a movement to sustainably transform the built environment.

Schellnhuber and his colleagues are calling for degraded forest areas to be restored and reforested and other landscapes afforested as quickly as possible. At the same time, they advocate for binding targets for timber construction in the next German coalition agreement, and contemporary reform of building regulations. According to Schellnhuber, all new buildings in Germany should be predominantly built from wood or plant cellulose – at least as far as this is compatible with sustainable forestry. In addition, the group advocates for the creation of an integrated German ministry for land use, regional development and the built environment.

Like the Bauhaus movement of the early 20th century, the “Bauhaus der Erde” aspires to create a holistic approach to the built environment. It will initiate a broad social discourse to shape a new vision of the built environment: a vision, based on the principles of sustainability, participation and aesthetics, that must be implemented in the coming decade. The “Bauhaus der Erde” has received start-up funding of 2.5 million euro from Laudes Foundation for the corresponding activities.

**Further information can be found at [www.bauhausdererde.org/news](http://www.bauhausdererde.org/news) as well as in the FAQs and selected quotes in the appendix to this press release.**

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## Quotes for the press release

**Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. John Schellhuber**, Founder and Director Emeritus, Potsdam Institute for Climate Impact Research; Founder of Bauhaus der Erde

“Bauhaus der Erde is basically about the elephant in the climate room – the fact that the built environment is responsible for more than 40 percent of global greenhouse gas emissions. Can we change that? Yes. We can avoid these emissions. We can even build so that we draw CO<sub>2</sub> out of the atmosphere. That works if we use bio-based materials and if we build our future cities out of wood”.

“What the construction industry has been unable to do is to develop a powerful narrative. A strong, convincing, likeable story that both consumers and the industry fall in love with and about which authorities can say: Great idea. Let's do that!”

**Prof. Dr. Dirk Messner**, President of the German Environment Agency (Umweltbundesamt)

“The building sector is still lagging behind in terms of climate protection in Germany in order to achieve our climate goals, we are not renovating buildings fast enough. It is obvious that in terms of primary energy use and greenhouse gas emissions, timber construction generally does better than traditional construction. Therefore, we should leverage the tremendous potential of timber construction. But we mustn't forget about energy efficient renovation: It's resource-efficient and fast, and wood is already being used a lot.”

“Building with wood must be in harmony with the forest conservation, which is absolutely essential for climate protection and for the protection of the forest habitats for biodiversity, groundwater formation and recreation. A fundamental prerequisite for building sustainably in wood is also to only use internationally certified wood, which clearly excludes wood from protected origins.”

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**Prof. Dipl.-Ing. Annette Hillebrandt**, Architect and Professor at the University of Wuppertal; Association of German Architects and Member of the German Sustainable Building Council

“A partial view of building construction and energy use in operation is no longer enough. In order to significantly reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and tackle the immense amount of waste from the construction sector, we must preserve and continue to use the existing building stock, as well as build it with renewable building materials in a way that is easy to dismantle and recycle. We have to stop the destruction caused by our land use and instead, with every new house we should give something back. In short: waste – by that I also mean CO<sub>2</sub> – is a design error!”

“In the words of Joseph Huber, we need construction in which production cycles are consistently compatible with natural cycles.”

“Let’s promote an aesthetic that is easily understandable and that is consistent with environmental sustainability. Let’s understand the beauty of architecture as a Kantian aesthetic that serves a purpose but respects our planet’s boundaries.”

**Leslie Johnston**, CEO, Laudes Foundation

“The climate emergency calls for bold and urgent action, particularly in how we build our homes, our offices, and the cities in which we live. Wood and bio-based materials will play an increasingly important role in accelerating the transition of our built environment into one that is sustainable, efficient and resilient. We at Laudes Foundation are honoured to support the vision of Prof. Schellhuber and the contribution of the broader “Bauhaus der Erde” movement to the EU’s ambition to turn cities into carbon sinks.”