

## Good Start and Mixed Emotions

For the First Time, KIT Directly Sent Observers to the World Climate Conference



*Dr. Christof Lorenz, Romy Durst, and Professor Harald Kunstmann (from the left) took part as official observers in the 24th World Climate Conference. (Photo: KIT)*

When 197 parties of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) met for the 24th Conference of the Parties (COP) in Katowice, Poland, in late 2018, scientists of KIT for the first time took part as official observers. Professor Harald Kunstmann, Dr. Christof Lorenz (both from the Atmospheric Environmental Research Division of KIT's Institute of Meteorology and Climate Research, IMK-IFU, Campus Alpine), and Romy Durst (Project Management Agency Karlsruhe, PTKA) attended the Conference from December 2 to 5 after the KIT Climate and Environment Center headed by Dr. Kirsten Hennrich had succeeded in accrediting the KIT. "This was an important step. It is a strong strategic signal that KIT can now directly send scientists to the COP conferences and contribute its research findings," Kunstmann summarizes.

Together with Wroclaw University of Science and Technology, the scientists organized the side event "Climate Proofing Strategies" at the EU pavilion. The event focused on strategies and instruments to adapt to the increasingly variable climate and to better prepare decision-makers. KIT's SaWaM project served as an example. With the help of seasonal forecasts and in close cooperation with local water suppliers, this project develops methods to adapt to increasing

water scarcity in dry regions. SaWaM, part of the initiative "Global Resource Water – GroW" of the Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF), was presented by Romy Durst. Under GroW, twelve joint projects are dedicated to studying global water management aspects and reaching the UN sustainability goals in the water sector.

And what did they achieve? "Massive attention in the media," Dr. Christof Lorenz says. "We gave a number of interviews to radio stations and newspapers. Climate proofing is a topic that has met with the interest of journalists, because it is rather new." According to Professor Harald Kunstmann, however, scientific impact on the conference proper was even smaller than at the COP 23 in Bonn in 2017: "At Katowice, generally less 'hard' science was presented than during the daily 'German Science Hour' of BMBF in Bonn. And during the media interviews, we felt that basic findings on global warming meanwhile play a rather subordinate role. They are largely known and the necessary coarse direction for climate protection is clear. Now, political and economic implementation is more important."

"It was obvious that all want to pull the rope together," Lorenz underlines. He was impressed by the fact that the countries of

the world met for two weeks to intensively discuss how emissions can be reduced. Still, it became obvious that this is a painstaking process. At Katowice, i.e. three years later, implementation of the decisions of the 2015 Paris Agreement was talked about. Hence, Kunstmann has rather mixed emotions: "On the one hand, it is good to see the flags of all states in the big conference halls and you personally feel that you are part of the big global community. On the other hand, greenhouse gas emissions are still increasing continuously. In 2018, more greenhouse gases were emitted than ever before. As long as this does not change, nothing is won for climate protection."

The next years will show whether the results and measures agreed upon in Katowice will have an effect. The fact that countries that do nothing against climate change can be denounced openly is a step in the right direction, Lorenz thinks. "Moreover, the big presence in the media that was also reached with our side event is a constant reminder for us to do even more for climate protection."



*197 parties ratified the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Kunstmann: "You personally feel that you are part of the big global community." (Photo: Harald Kunstmann)*

The KIT scientists are convinced that the efforts associated with COP accreditation and the organization of the side event were worthwhile. It was quite obvious that the presence of science at such political conferences is important; science owes this to its research funding institutions. "COP 24 was a good start for KIT as a UNFCCC-accredited organization. Its presence should be further increased at future conferences," Kunstmann and Lorenz agree.