

Begrüßung von Landesbischöfin Kristina Kühnbaum-Schmidt bei der Jugendklimakonferenz in Stralsund, Dienstag, 22. August 2023

- Sperrfrist 22. August, 20 Uhr-

„La mer - qu'on voit danser le long des golfes clairs a des reflets d'argent.“ This is the beginning of a wonderful French Chanson. I really love this song although it's already many years old. In English: „The sea, we see dancing along the shores of clear bays, shimmers with silver“. Everytime I hear this chanson, I am immediately longing for the sea, for blue water, sunshine, warm summer evenings at the beach and some easy living. I hope, this week there will be some time also for you to enjoy some of the things I was just talking about!

Sixty of you came here sailing across the Baltic Sea. I suppose, you got to know not only the sea shimmering with silver, but also the stormy and rough sea. Yes, the sea. Yes, the oceans. They can be so wonderful in many ways. A cradle of life, abounding in living beings, and most of us know only a few of them.

But the oceans are in danger. Climate change and human activities are causing the health of oceans to decline at an alarming rate. Only a few examples: Today, plastic accounts for 85% of marine litter, putting all marine life at serious risk. Chemical pollution is also a concern - oil and other harmful liquid substances, fertilisers and pesticides, as well as sunscreens and pharmaceutical waste. Overfishing - over a third of fish stocks around the world are being overfished. Each year, the oceans absorb 23% of human-caused carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and capture 90% of the excess heat created by these emissions. Due to global warming and human activities, temperatures are rising rapidly, and the oceans are overwhelmed.

Covering 70% of the planet, oceans provide us with oxygen and food. They regulate the climate, and are home to 80% of life on Earth. But Oceans are becoming warmer, more acidic, and contain less oxygen. Sea levels are also rising. Combined with the impacts of overfishing and pollution this is leading to a loss of marine biodiversity.

I think, I mentioned enough reasons why we have to talk, to discuss and to act. Wonderful that you came here for participating at our sixth Climate youth conference! Welcome! You came here to Stralsund from Austria, Ukraine, Poland and Finland, and from Germany - and I am very pleased to welcome all of you! It's a pleasure for us that you are our guests!

In the following days during this gathering you will spend a lot of time together, you will get to know each other better by learning, discussing and finding solutions and - hopefully - developing strategies to implement these solutions in your context. Certainly, you will discuss how to engage with decision-makers and politicians to ensure the rights of members of future generations to a safe and healthy environment and to a life with dignity. And perhaps you will be courageous enough to talk about this in the final discussion on Friday with politicians and the regional bishop. Perhaps you will ask them about the conservation and restoration of wetlands here in

Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, also about wetlands owned by the church. In my opinion: It's time to make wetland recovery a priority.

„Meer haben - weniger brauchen“ that's the topic chosen by the organisers of this conference. It's kind of a pun, a little bit difficult to translate, in English it means something like „care for the oceans - have more - need less“. This topic reminds us: This year, Earth Overshoot Day is already some weeks ago (2. August). It marks the date when humanity has exhausted nature's budget for the year. And it calls us to deep solidarity and a quest for justice for those who have contributed to this the least, but suffer the most, physically, existentially, and ecologically. In this regard, it will be crucial to change our way of life - first of all in the global north. And that means: needing less, consuming less, sharing more, using things together. I know, that this is not easy at all. But I think it's worth thinking about what makes us really happy. Words of the Bible are encouraging me: „be content with what you have, because God has said, “Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.” (Hebrews 13,5)

Well, I am really impressed looking at you this evening. I am impressed by your commitment for caring for creation. You are giving an example to how we all should act. Thank you very much to everybody who prepared this conference and who in various ways will contribute to this gathering. I'm looking forward to spending time with you, sharing our experiences and our faith. I wish you all a beautiful time here in Stralsund, good experiences and results. And hopefully you make new friends! May the Lord bless you and keep you.