On 25 February 2008, an Ecologic Dinner Dialogue was held in Berlin in honour of Mark Halle, European Director of the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) as well as Global Director of Trade & Investment. Mark Halle introduced key aspects of the role of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in international environmental governance (IEG). He pointed out that environmental issues for governments often come second, leaving NGOs as important actors in the field of IEG. The decisive question of how to move environmental issues to the centre of political decision making still needs to be tackled.

Mark Halle [1] emphasised that several efforts to bring the issue of IEG to the centre of political decision making have failed so far. While there have been more activities (e.g. spread of information, implementation of large events or application of new strategies), no real change in substance has been achieved. Mark Halle noted that the global community is not advancing towards sustainable development at an adequate pace. Looking at key characteristics of good governance (such as the rule of law, transparency and participation), Mark Halle highlighted accountability as the main principle.

Mark Halle stressed that IEG is currently in a crisis which can be traced back to a lack of accountability. He pointed out that a political culture of non-accountability is in place, leading to the challenge of addressing the fundamental structures of unsustainable economies. NGOs play an important role because they act for the public interest. As a result, they have no interest in maintaining the current (unsustainable) system. Mark Halle concluded that trade liberalisation and sustainable development are not necessarily mutually exclusive. The contribution of NGOs should consist in showing governments how to combine both goals because the world community may either achieve sustainable development.
or neither sustainability nor development.

The subsequent discussion touched upon the following issues and questions:

- What role can and/or should NGOs as well as think tanks play within IEG and do they have the power to play these roles?
- What message should be brought by which means to which actors? For instance, key actors to achieve sustainable development are the ministries of finance and trade.
- The discussion of governance should be strengthened in a transatlantic partnership.
- The issue of change was addressed. (How) Can tipping points be anticipated or even artificially created?

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