



**Global Young Academy**  
The voice of young scientists around the world

## **THANK-YOU TO STATE SECRETARY**

**17 May 2013**

**Rees Kassen, Co-Chair GYA**

Ladies and gentlemen, distinguished guests, colleagues and friends. Today is a very special day for us at the GYA. We have grown in the past five years from an idea into the beginnings of a global institution. We are thrilled and honoured that we are to continue having a home in Germany. Please allow me, on behalf of my co-chair, Bernard Slippers, our Managing Director, Heidi Wedel, the Executive Committee of the GYA, our members, alumni, and supporters around the world, to offer my most heart-felt thanks to Madame State Secretary Quennet-Thielen for her kind words and to the German Ministry of Education and Research for this most welcome announcement.

This announcement is a testament to the leading role that Germany has been playing in supporting the most promising young researchers both nationally and around the world. It was Germany nearly 13 years ago that began the Young Academy movement through the foundation of The German YA, and with the vision of the senior academies, Leopoldina, our hosts, and BBAW. The GYA is a natural next step for the YA movement. We are thrilled to be able to take our position alongside these venerable institutions and the many others that support and promote international research excellence in Germany, including the Humboldt Foundation and the Volkswagen Foundation. The high esteem with which these German institutions are held internationally is testament to the German federal government's commitment to research excellence and international diplomacy. Thank you for your leadership, and we look forward to working with you in the future.

This announcement comes at a critical time in the growth of the GYA and the YA movement worldwide. We have grown remarkably in a short space of time. In less than 5 years we have gone from a suggestion into the beginnings of a truly global institution, one that I hope will become as indispensable to the international community as it has been to its members. Increasingly the GYA is being called upon for access to the incredible network of young researchers around the world that we have built, and to take the lead on any number of important and exciting new projects.

I might take this opportunity to highlight a few of these: the Global State of YS project, supported by the BMBF is perhaps our most prominent at the moment but there are others. We have been approached by the major funders of Grand Challenges research – USAID, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, and Grand Challenges Canada – to help them connect more effectively with young researchers. We also have been asked by the National Academies in the US to host a high level meeting on climate change sometime in the next two years. We continue to partner with the World Economic Forum and the IAP in the development of the Forum’s YS programme. I would especially like to acknowledge at this point, the outstanding leadership and support we have received from the IAP from the very beginning. Thank you.

And increasingly our members are being asked to take on leadership roles both internationally and nationally in their home countries, sometimes through membership on panels and discussions, by contributing to research studies and position papers, or taking over the leadership of important national laboratories and research institutions. The funding announced today and provided so generously by the BMBF will allow us to better coordinate these efforts, prosecute new projects, and, most importantly, continue to be the voice of young scientists around the world.

Allow me to close with a few words of thanks. First to my colleagues who helped launch this idea, and to the German Young Academy for providing the spark that lit the flame. In the space of 2 and a half intense, exhausting, and exhilarating days in Berlin in 2010, we laid the foundation for the GYA. We have nurtured the idea, seen it evolve and grow and are now in the wonderful position of beginning to see it mature. Thank you, from me personally, and from all the members of the GYA now and to come.

Second, let me say a deep and sincere thank you to the Leopoldina, the BBAW, and the IAP for their support and promotion of young scientists, the Young Academy movement, and especially the GYA over the last 4 years. It was because of your collective vision, that YS deserved to have an independent voice that they themselves determine and that this is important for civil society and development around the world, that provided the initial motivation for the GYA. Thank you for trusting us, and to care enough about our success to continue partnering and supporting us along the way.

Third, to Heidi Wedel, our MD. Heidi, it is a testament to your commitment to the GYA and what it aims to do, not to mention your incredibly hard work and generosity, that we are here today. It is Heidi who has helped open doors, done the bulk of the legwork in discussions, putting together the final proposal, coordinating work loads and schedules, often in multiple time zones, in putting this proposal together and bringing the GYA to today. Heidi, thank you for your leadership, your skills, and your commitment to YS and the GYA and, I should personally, for your friendship.

There are many more of you in the audience and elsewhere around the world that deserve a share of the credit for bring the GYA to this point. I'm sorry I cannot mention you all today, but please know that it is through your hard work that the GYA can celebrate today.

To the GYA membership, I ask that you take this announcement for what I think it is: an investment in you as the next generation of leaders in global research. Let us not squander this opportunity. Let us remind ourselves of the ideals upon which the GYA was founded: excellence, independence, impact. Together with our German partners, help us make the world a better place, both for the generations of researchers that will follow us, and the world as a whole.

Thank you.