

Dear EGU participants, dear medallists, ladies and gentlemen,

it is a great tradition that, in springtime, the center of Europe becomes the focus of the geoscientific world when EGU holds their General Assembly in Vienna. Although there has been contact between the EGU and the Austrian Ministry of Science and Research on several occasions, it is a great pleasure for me to be the first minister to address the assembly. I am happy to be here – and I feel I have a personal relationship to the geosciences as my own son is a geologist.

When I walk through the building the conference appears truly impressive, both in size and intensity. Austria is proud to host a meeting of so much diversity, with people from more than a hundred countries, from countless disciplines and cultural backgrounds.

Indeed, as many of the most pressing research questions are getting more interdisciplinary, this meeting is an ideal forum for an exchange of ideas across the various disciplines of the geosciences. The proximity of the conference venue to the buildings of the United Nations may be symbolic of the role of communication in today's research: excellent research tends to be international and one could say that EGU has become a kind of „United Nations of Geosciences“.

Geoscientists were amongst the very first to grasp the essential role of international networking that is needed for addressing complex issues in the field of society.

Austria has a very active geoscience community. Research institutions such as the Central Institute for Meteorology and Geodynamics are addressing changes in our environment, climate, ecosystems, glaciers and the water cycle in close cooperation with universities and other partners. The Geological Survey of Austria, amongst many other tasks, is the result of activity in the research of sustainable development of minerals as well as of the mitigation of risks arising from geohazards in this country of spectacular geology and geomorphology. Organised through the Austrian Academy of Sciences there is a very substantial community exploring Earth System Sciences. I am happy to see that all of these institutions are well-represented at this meeting here in Vienna.

As Austrian minister of research and science I am honoured that the EGU once again chose Vienna for its general assembly, and I am especially glad that you recently have decided to host your General Assemblies here in the next 5 years. Also, I am very proud that the EGU elected the Austrian scientist Prof. Blöschl as its president.

Prof. Blöschl, ladies and gentlemen, please enjoy your assembly in Vienna and good luck for the EGU!

Thank you!