



Low Carbon Technology Partnerships initiative

MEDIA COVERAGE

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Business yet to grasp role in new UN development goals

By Megan Rowling

BARCELONA, Sept 14 (Thomson Reuters Foundation) - Business will have a much bigger role to play in achieving new global development targets than it did in meeting previous U.N. goals, but private companies need a stronger case for getting involved, a sustainable business leader said.

Peter Bakker, head of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), said corporations have helped shape the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which range from ending hunger to providing water and sanitation for all.

But most businesses have yet to think through how they can contribute to meeting the 169 targets set out in the SDGs, due to be adopted at a U.N. summit this month.

While the majority of forward-thinking companies know climate change is happening and have drawn up strategies for tackling it, "I don't think we're at the same level of engagement yet when it comes to the SDGs," Bakker said.

In contrast to climate change, "the business case for getting engaged" with the SDGs has still not been made clear, he added.

That is partly because the SDGs, to be met by 2030, cover such a wide range of issues, from good governance to gender equality and sustainable consumption.

To coincide with the Sept. 25-27 summit, the WBCSD and partners will launch a guide to help companies work out which new goals apply to them, where they could have an impact, and how to measure their progress.



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When it comes to providing affordable, sustainable and modern energy for all, as the SDGs will promise, solutions such as solar microgrids are already available, said Bakker, the former CEO of Dutch delivery giant TNT NV.

"Too little is being done to implement what the world needs," he said.

CLIMATE SOLUTIONS

In the coming weeks, the WBCSD also plans to bring together global and local companies to hammer out action plans for combating climate change, ahead of December talks in Paris tasked with agreeing a new U.N. deal to limit global warming.

Company executives will attend a series of meetings in South Africa, India, China, Brazil, Australia and the United States.

They will decide how best their businesses could advance solutions such as reducing the carbon footprint of the fossil fuel sector, making industries more energy efficient, helping forests store more carbon and boosting renewable energy.

For example, in Johannesburg on Sept. 4, the WBCSD launched a programme to develop and implement microgrids in Africa, bringing together leading energy companies including ABB, Alstom, EDF, Engie, Eskom, First Solar and Schneider Electric.

Some 1.1 billion people lack access to electricity worldwide. The programme's backers believe low-carbon microgrids can supply power where centralised grids are failing or do not reach, forcing people to rely on high-emission alternatives, the WBCSD said.

Its aim is to have workable, low-carbon corporate action plans in place by the Paris climate conference, Bakker said.

A new U.N. climate agreement should provide commitments to reach net zero carbon emissions by a certain date, use market mechanisms like carbon pricing, and set up a system to ratchet up targets for emissions reductions every five years, he added.

"That's the environment a business person needs, because then not changing no longer becomes an option - economic incentives to change are being put in place," he said. (Reporting by Megan Rowling; Editing by Ros Russell; editing by Ros Russell. Please credit the Thomson Reuters Foundation, the charitable arm of Thomson Reuters, that covers humanitarian news, women's rights, trafficking, corruption and climate change. Visit www.trust.org)



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Daily Mail - <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/wires/reuters/article-3234110/Business-grasp-role-new-UN-development-goals.html>

Thompson Reuters Foundation - <http://www.trust.org/item/20150914154848-pscpo/?source=fiOtherNews2>