



Low Carbon Technology Partnerships initiative

MEDIA COVERAGE

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South Africa Action2020 Climate Dialogue, September 3 - 4, 2015

Leading Special Forces for Sustainability: How Peter Bakker and the WBCSD Isolate, Take Action, and Deliver Measurable Impacts on 9 Global Priorities

Part 1 - Leading Special Forces for Sustainability, A Conversation with Mr. Peter Bakker, President and CEO of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development

"I saw the limitations of one company," Peter Bakker reflected when asked about what drives his passion to align global business leaders toward creating a better world.

Mr. Bakker, who has for the past three and a half years served as President and CEO of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), understands well the contradiction of power and humility felt by so many CEOs.

"Doom and gloom simply is not part of my persona," he remarked. "Humanity is running out of time. The science on global climate and ecosystem change has progressed a great deal and we now know it's undeniable that humanity needs to act swiftly. As a problem-solver I've always been driven by asking, what are the solutions business can deliver? what barriers need to be circumvented? how can global business concerns be scaled-up to deliver solutions, drive measurable impacts, and in collaboration with multilateral organizations and stakeholders. This is a systems-challenge, one that requires unwavering commitment and leadership. I've always felt compelled to take this challenge head-on."

It takes a unique kind of leader, thinker, and doer to have the personal will to immerse themselves into large-scale global issues and simultaneously lead with impact. In my recent conversation with Mr. Bakker he revealed how the WBCSD is creating action-oriented teams of committed CEOs who are, as he was a few years ago, eager to extend their reach, leverage their resources, and act upon complex global challenges with the fervor of a Special Forces team.



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More than 17% of the world's population, some 1.3 billion people, have no access to electricity. Think about that for a moment in the context of your daily life. Every text message, Tweet, Facebook like, Instagram post, sip of java, late night snack, and trip to the grocery store requires electricity -- and a lot of it. Electricity not only jolts our fast paced lifestyle, it also powers facilities, infrastructure, and systems critical to the health and wellbeing of billions of people worldwide.

Developed nations have come to rely heavily on electricity as a lifeline, a ubiquitous commodity valued as a common, just like the air and water which enable life. Yet as billions of bytes of data change hands every second in the developed world, a very significant portion of the world's population lives in relative darkness, unconnected and unable to access electricity, a commodity now considered by a majority of humanity to be essential to basic survival.

Earlier this month, Johannesburg, South Africa stood as the backdrop as the WBCSD formally launched its innovative microgrids program, an integral component of their Low Carbon Technology Partnerships initiative (LCTPi). The WBCSD's microgrids program is designed to accelerate the scaled-up deployment of low-carbon microgrid solutions by offering customers localized, clean, reliable and proven energy generation and systems.

Placing emphasis on achieving scale, collaboration, and action, the WBCSD will be launching additional programs within their LCTPi throughout the world in the next few weeks. The targeted effort, known as the Action2020 Climate Dialogues, has been designed to mobilize resources and provide a clear framework for businesses to take action on region-specific sustainable development priorities around the world.

For example, the LCTPi, which is supported by the French Presidency of COP21 (the UN's climate conference), is being put into action by the WBCSD, the Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN), and the International Energy Agency (IEA). The LCTPi initiative is laser-focused on establishing the policy and financial instruments that need to be in place to accelerate the diffusion of existing, low-carbon technologies while also nurturing relationships to research, develop, demonstrate, and deploy (RDD&D) new technologies through public-private partnerships (PPPs).

In advance of the upcoming COP21 Paris negotiations, the WBCSD is taking swift effort to rally leaders of consequence and character to collaborate on the development of low-carbon solutions that can address the impacts of climate change now.



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Mr. Bakker stated, "the Action2020 initiative lays out nine key priorities that require urgent attention. The WBCSD worked with more than 800 scientists to define these priorities, and assign outcome-based and measurable opportunities for engaging business to address these global challenges."

The nine priorities defined by Action2020 include: climate change, release of nutrient elements, ecosystems, exposure to harmful substances, water, basic needs and rights, skills and employment, sustainable lifestyles, and food, feed, fibre, and biofuels. Under Peter Bakker's leadership the WBCSD, its members, and partners are creating action plans for each of these nine areas.

Mr. Bakker noted, "in the Action2020 Climate Dialogs we are hosting a series of global roundtables, in India, Brazil, China, Australia, the U.S., and elsewhere, garnering representation from key stakeholder groups to discuss the action plans developed for LCTPi, aiming to have each action plan signed-off by CEOs who are committed to take action and see the plan through."

During our conversation Mr. Bakker provided further insight to the WBCSD's LCTPi and microgrid program recently launched in Johannesburg. In particular, he emphasized the strategy his team is implementing to empower and engage world business leaders to collaborate on market-based solutions for sustainable development. He revealed that leaders from ABB, Alstom, EDF, Engie, Eskom, First Solar, and Schneider Electric have assembled a microgrids working group to specifically address the sustainable energy needs of countries like South Africa.

This level of commitment and accountability is hopeful, particularly since attaining sustainability has been, at best, a winding journey for some, and an elusive and empty goal for most, governments and businesses.

Mr. Bakker further pointed out, "the converging issues are very complex. When you look at serving the needs of 7.3 billion people while impacting issues such as climate, it's outright overwhelming. Even those with significant resources and intellect struggle on where to begin. This is where the WBCSD and our Action2020 initiative has fit in. We are working with business leaders to self-select those solutions they can bring to scale across the nine priorities and have clear, measurable impact."

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M Part 2 - Leading Special Forces for Sustainability, A Conversation with Mr. Peter Bakker, President and CEO of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development

Up to this point in human evolution, nations have developed their economy, wealth, infrastructure, and society on the back of cheap energy. It is no surprise that developed nations place enormous utilitarian value to electric power. Electricity has become intrinsically linked to our existence and the protection of human health and the environment.

But it seems our evolution with electricity (and energy in general) has come full circle. Hundreds of years ago, businesses and communities sprouted up where they could put energy to work for them. We settled near rivers for hydropower, or took advantage of wind, sun, or other natural resources. Now considered a relic of past industrialization for many communities, combined hot water and steam systems once provided localized thermal and water resources in an efficient manner. When we realized that we could move electronics of power and molecules of water over long-distances using pipelines and wire, we thought it was more economical to create centralized power and water facilities.

A century later we have begun to see once again, the merits of localized, efficient, right-sized power production. The design, development, and deployment of microgrids now provide a solution to address requirements for affordable, reliable, clean, and local dispatched and managed power. As our economy and society has matured we've realized that economies of scale only result in cost savings and societal benefits only to a nominal degree.

As global population continues to grow, as natural resources become constrained, as urban areas densify population, and as society continues to wrestle with adapting to the impacts of climate change, our new reality is that traditional economic theories are being challenged, and that the basic principles of physics and common sense are reinserting themselves into the economic realities of daily life.

Sustainable development has had many challenges in achieving scale in recent years, not because of monetary or technological barriers, but because of entrenched human error in how we establish priorities, mobilize political will, achieve bilateral agreements, and ultimately, take action. Mr. Bakker reflected, "COP15 in Copenhagen was a wake-up call for many governments, NGOs, and global business leaders."

He continued, "although barriers remain with scaling finance, technology, and policy solutions for larger scale infrastructure projects such as carbon capture, where we can pragmatically make the most significant advances are in leadership and personal commitment, not just from a handful of committed CEOs, but from a generation of executives that mobilize to take action, ahead of capital market pressures."

As an example, Mr. Bakker applauded the work of Unilever who since 2009, has been working with the Rainforest Alliance, Forest Stewardship Council, the Tropical Forest Alliance 2020 and other stakeholder groups to put into place sustainable supply chains and sourcing practices toward eliminate deforestation. Deforestation accounts for nearly 15% of total greenhouse gas emissions. Unilever has committee to achieve zero net deforestation by 2020 across five of their key commodities: palm oil, soy, paper and board, beef, and tea.



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Mr. Bakker noted that within two years of announcing their 2020 forestry commitment, the forest stewardship practices of many Unilever suppliers began to change dramatically. He said that more of these kinds of successes are possible when stakeholders team up to define mutual goals, establish and continually reinforce trust, and act with sincerity and integrity.

"This is where the WBCSD fits in and can provide value," added Mr. Bakker. "Too often we see business asking for the policy or agreement to be put into place, and pointing the finger at government for acting too slow; or we see government pointing the finger at business saying do something, innovate, accelerate technology adoption. The WBCSD is working hard to foster a healthier, more productive dialog. By breaking down these barriers to collaboration, we strive to bring a common narrative the stakeholders buy into, so that they can leverage their unique skill sets, capabilities, and interests and see where they contribute to mutual objectives. This process is essential to success, and in our experience works very well."

No matter what label you give it (circular, blue, green, cradle-to-cradle, sharing, upcycling, downcycling, closed-loop, eco-efficient, regenerative), a new and more enlightened economy has emerged. Different models and approaches for taking stock of and valuing the priorities of this generation (i.e., human health, environment, safety, security, innovation, material flows, natural resource damages, ecosystem services, and a myriad of other factors) are now quantified and entered as hard assets or liabilities into the spreadsheets for major banks, corporations, NGOs, and governments. As systems-thinking further infiltrates the cost of capital, updated models of doing business, and altogether new products and services, will compete with the traditional economic approaches that constrain this generation from achieving sustainable development.

Mr. Bakker added, "ultimately we know what we need to do. We need provide an integrated teaming approach to sustainable development. We find there a lot of CEO's that want to be part of something larger than themselves and their company. They want to put their name and resources to task to address specific sustainability priorities. Our goal is to help them realize that passion by prioritizing the needs so that their resources can be directed to those tasks which they can have the greatest impact."

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