

Davos World Resources Forum calls for immediate action to double global resource efficiency

Davos, 22 September, 2011 – Over 400 resource experts from over 40 countries gathered at the World Resources Forum (WRF) in Davos, Switzerland from 19-21 September 2011, and called on governments, businesses and civil society to take immediate action to double the current level of resource productivity by 2020 and reach at least a fivefold increase by 2050.

By 2050, the world population will rise from 7 billion to 9 billion, putting even greater pressure on natural resources. Urgent action is needed to address the global resource challenges the world is currently facing and which are ingrained in the multifaceted worldwide crises related to financial systems, food supply and climate change. Doubling resource productivity can only effectively address these challenges if they are supported by concrete actions from the international community:

- As change is only possible if it can be measured, policy developments need to be supported by quantitative targets. These targets are crucial for encouraging consumers and businesses to partake in sustainable consumption and production.
- The development and implementation of concrete roadmaps by national and international governments is needed, along with clear plans for implementing legal frameworks and shifting fiscal pressure from labour to resources and pollution.
- Radical change and ground-breaking innovations are needed in developing countries and emerging economies as resource efficiency is essential to eradicate poverty.
- Individuals need to be empowered to take action supported by an ethical framework that addresses both the environmental and social impacts of consumption.

The hosting Swiss government specified that the outcomes of WRF will be used as input for the preparatory process of the Rio +20 Earth Summit 2012. Participants agreed to review the progress at the next WRF, to be held from 14-17 October 2012 in Beijing, China.

The urgent need for behaviour change

Echoing the call to action, European Commissioner for the Environment, Janez Potočnik, stated in his keynote speech that European economies are “‘locked-in’ to resource-inefficient and unsustainable behaviour. Breaking out of that ‘lock-in’ requires new technologies and innovation in our systems, business models, and behaviour.” Acknowledging this urgent need for radical action and behaviour change, the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) called for a new ‘green’ Industrial Revolution and explained that in the last 100 years, resource use has increased 8 times whereas economic growth grew by a factor of 23. Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker, Co-Chair UNEP Resource Panel: “*The success of the multi-fold increase in labour productivity should now be ‘copied’ to double resource productivity.*”



The role of developing countries in tackling the global resource challenge

The link between resource efficiency and economic growth is especially relevant for developing countries and emerging economies, as natural resources have a significant role in the eradication of poverty. Alice Kaudia, Environment Secretary of Kenya: *“A shortage in resources such as land and water will lead to conflicts. Therefore, food, energy, water, land and labour are key target areas for resource efficiency policies. Resource efficiency will lead to lower costs, which will not only benefit the business world, but will also help to eradicate poverty.”* Essential in the process of eradicating poverty are technology transfer, access to resource-efficient technologies and financial support for facilitating such radical changes.

Green and circular economy

In order to reach the goal of doubling resource productivity by 2020, the international community needs to focus on working towards a green and circular economy: one that results in improved quality of life, as well as a significant reduction of resource inefficiency. A green and circular economy is characterized by the decoupling of economic growth from resource consumption and continued resource ownership. Dajian Zhu, Tongji University Shanghai: *“An approach only focused on efficiency is insufficient: we need to move from eco-efficiency to eco-effectiveness. This means creating a better life by consuming less – a social innovation based on the circular economy of reusing, reducing and recycling.”*

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About the World Resources Forum

The World Resources Forum is a joint initiative of the Swiss Federal Laboratories for Materials Science and Technology (Empa) and Prof. Dr. Friedrich Schmidt-Bleek (President of the Factor 10 Institute) and is supported by the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), the Swiss Federal Office for the Environment (BAFU), the German Federal Environment Agency (UBA), the Swiss Academy of Engineering Sciences (SATW), the Mercator Foundation Switzerland, Hewlett Packard and other organizations. WRF is a science-based platform to exchange knowledge about the economic, political and environmental implications of global resource use. It promotes innovation for resource productivity by building bridges between scientists, policymakers, business, NGO's and the public. Starting January 2012 the World Resources Forum Association will be established: an independent organisation which will organise the annual World Resources Forum in various parts of the world.

For more information about the World Resources Forum please visit the following website:
<http://www.worldresourcesforum.org/>

Media contact

Pamela Bons
Hill & Knowlton International
Phone: +32 2 737 95 00
Email: pbons@hillandknowlton.com

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