



# World Resources Forum 2013

October 6 – 9, 2013 • Davos Switzerland

## Chairman's Summary World Resources Forum 2013, Davos, 6-9 October 2013

1. Over 400 participants from 55 countries and international organisations attended and actively contributed to the World Resources Forum 2013 in Davos, Switzerland, 7-9 October, 2013.
2. Representatives of governments, business, research as well as civil society, exchanged their views on how a resource revolution could be achieved by improving global resource governance, increasing resource productivity and radically decreasing the environmental and social burden of current consumption and production patterns. They formulated a number of key policy recommendations, priority next steps and further research activities.
3. Urgent boost of investments in resource productivity and finding alternative materials substituting fossil fuels, metals and minerals is crucial for sustainable growth.
4. Whilst poverty eradication should remain the most important Sustainable Development Goal, immediate attention should be given towards decoupling economic growth and wellbeing from consumption, as well as decoupling consumption from environmental degradation. Global supply of resources needs to be secured by improving international cooperation and coordination.
5. Underlying driving forces of conspicuous consumption such as desire for a high social status should be identified, documented and analysed. Insights therefrom can inspire the private sector to develop and mainstream new products and services that satisfy consumer needs in a less materialistic way, e.g. through social media and new Information and Communication Technology (ICT) applications.

## GOVERNANCE

6. In a world confronted with a crisis of international multilateralism, improving existing institutions rather than creating new governance structures was seen as the best way forward. In particular, the necessity of an intergovernmental forum for discussing resource governance issues was highlighted. UNEP's International Resource Panel as well as the

UN Global Compact initiative and the World Resources Forum were portrayed as international initiatives with potential for strengthening international cooperation.

7. Governments must move rapidly to combine resource and energy policies, because neither can be successful without the other.
8. Incentives for reducing per capita resource use in high consumption countries could be implemented by a coalition of the willing, for instance with a border tax levied on imports from countries with a per capita resource use higher than that of the permit scheme (for instance 6 tonnes per capita per year). A common target for reducing resource consumption below the ecological footprint of one planet by 2050 was mentioned by some.
9. Countries should periodically, at least annually, report on resource productivity, as the need for robust knowledge and universal data transparency is becoming urgent. Resource efficiency indicators need to be defined more clearly to enable meaningful setting of targets and adequate monitoring of global use of resources.
10. It is indispensable that government leaders use the wealth of their nations responsibly, avoiding corruption, conflict and social instability. A more integrated engagement of the civil society is therefore necessary for achieving transparency and accountability.
11. Many called for rapid actions led by coalitions of the willing or bilateral agreements rather than waiting for universal initiatives. Practical and meaningful progress can also be achieved by means of promoting action on a city level.
12. The World Resources Forum has an integral role in facilitating the dialogue between top-down programmes and bottom-up initiatives in order to accelerate the transition towards a resource efficient society. Science and knowledge institutions should be linked with policy action programmes more actively, in order to conduct a policy relevant research agenda.

## **BUSINESSES AND MARKETS**

13. New services and performance oriented business models and circular economy approaches need to be globally developed and implemented. Barriers to sustainable business, such as trading systems, logistics, cultures and habits, must be hurdled. The paradigm of “selling more” must shift towards focusing on how to use and re-use products more efficiently and prolonged.
14. Key tools and strategies include sustainable product and service design, extended producer responsibility and product-service system, reduction of raw materials extraction, and waste prevention and recycling, for which adequate mixes of policy instruments – financial, legislative and information – need to be implemented.

15. Recycling is a functioning concept but for optimal returning secondary materials to the market still needed is an increase of collection rates, development of technology, product design and overcoming of financial and legislative barriers. Accessibility to data was mentioned as a critical factor for eco-industrial development.
16. It is time to recognise that resource prices can lead to important gains in market-driven resource productivity, like labour prices have done for labour productivity. Resource taxation, shifting the tax burden from renewable (including labour) to non-renewable resources, should be a priority policy measure. Countries that dare to do this can become leaders of the world economy. Increasing resource prices can also provide opportunities for diversifying economies in resource producing countries, such as in Africa. For this, resource rents need to be reinvested in human capital, infrastructure and innovation.
17. Many observed that the financial sector is twisted, disconnected from the real world, and poses a major barrier for substantial change; a better understanding is necessary. Instead of waiting for financial reforms, individuals can already embark on sustainable investment by advising their employer on how and where their pension fund money should be invested. Currently, only 10% of these funds is invested in sustainable operations. A goal could be to increase this to 25% in 20-30 years.

## **BEHAVIOUR AND CONSUMERS**

18. Continuous improvements in resource efficiency must be accompanied by reductions on the demand side. A transition to a post-consumer society requires new notions of wellbeing in people's private lives, and new types of economic activities that produce livelihoods that do not depend on ever growing consumption.
19. Current behaviour is unsustainable and resilient; behavioural change is necessary. Some referred to a dissonance between personal values and behaviour, as well as the linkages between consumer behaviour with social and cultural conditions. Some called for sufficiency concepts and strategies, including leisure time instead of material consumption, and re-localisation versus globalisation.
20. There is no correlation between happiness and personal income above a certain threshold; hence, consumption is not what drives human happiness. Simply manufacturing evermore green products does not lead to sustainable consumption. Businesses should concentrate their services and products on increasing quality of life.
21. Social sciences and humanities research have an increasing and important role to play in analysing and interpreting underlying drivers for consumption choices. This can be done by co-designing alongside social, natural and technical scientists' research on natural resources, by translating and communicating findings to decision-makers and individuals, and by initiating and facilitating critical reflection in society about values associated with

consumption behaviour.

22. Resource efficiency, as a grand societal challenge, should be included throughout the educational system, ranging from awareness raising in primary and secondary schools, towards hands-on approaches in a broad level of higher education programmes. Young people should be trained in taking over bridging functions between disciplines, but also between various stakeholder groups like science, economy and politics.
23. Informing and empowering young consumers through formal and informal education is important; this was illustrated by a young participant in the WRF Kids programme who commented: “When I was young my father repeatedly told me to be happy with what I have. I never understood that until today.”

## **NEXT STEPS**

24. The conclusions, lessons learnt and new ideas for projects and partnerships will be actively disseminated and followed up by the Secretariat and participants of the conference.
25. The next World Resources Forum will be held in Arequipa, Peru, 19-22 October, 2014.

The World Resources Forum (WRF) is the global science-based platform for sharing knowledge about economic, political, social and environmental implications of global resource use.

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