



GLOBE
EUROPEAN UNION EU

Event Summary

Earth Overshoot Day, 22 September 2015

Sirpa Pietikäinen, president of GLOBE EU, welcomed participants and introduced the forthcoming climate negotiations in Paris (COP21) as the main theme of this year's event. The campaign launched by the Global Footprint Network for Earth Overshoot Day highlights the increased concentration of carbon in the atmosphere.

Panel Session 1

Pierre Schellekens, deputy head of Cabinet for Commissioner Arias Cañete, opened the first session by underscoring the importance of an agreement in Paris and reassuring the audience that the EU plans to be a deal maker, not a deal taker. The good news is that a political dynamic already exists with already a four times higher coverage with INCDs than under the current protocol. The current text, however, is still too long and negotiators need to step up their efforts to conclude the technical negotiations. He confirmed the EU's target as 2°C with a clear trajectory to keep efforts on track.

Derek Eaton, Vice President of research with the Global Footprint Network, explained his organization's work to determine Earth Overshoot Day, which this year fell on August 13. As the largest single part of its ecological impact, humankind's carbon footprint has more than doubled since 1970. Although ambition levels could be higher, Dr. Eaton felt that the current dynamics were already quite positive.

Sam Van den plas, policy director with WWF, commented on the context of the upcoming climate deal. Even though moral momentum is the highest ever (even religious leaders have taken action), he said, mankind is facing the worst climate conditions ever. An agreement in Paris should therefore send a strong signal to phase out carbon emissions. It should protect the most vulnerable and account for mitigation and adaptation. WWF has been advocating for an

agreement which is flexible enough to allow for the scaling-up of ambition levels. The EU's role is important to make sure that any agreement is based on science and includes a strong accounting framework.

Luc Bas, director of IUCN's European regional office, concurred with the previous speakers that Paris could be the starting point for something more ambitious. Still, Earth Overshoot Day falls earlier every year. He explained as his personal view that ambition levels could be higher given that the EU is only one percent short of its 2020 target to date. The unwanted truth is that we need to reduce our overall consumption and acknowledge that, due to higher consumption, we are actually emitting more. Mr. Bas stated that the role of local governments, especially those of cities and regions, is crucial to achieve higher reduction levels.

During the discussion which followed, Sirpa Pietikäinen emphasized the importance of transparency and accountability and asked if we should establish a world-wide accounting system.

Panel Session 2

Seb Dance, GLOBE EU Vice-Chair, opened the second panel session. He underscored the importance of cooperation between different organizations to obtain higher levels of commitment and accelerate the implementation of objectives.

Sandrine Dixson-Declève, who heads the Brussels office of the Cambridge Institute for Sustainable Leadership and is director of The Prince of Wales's Corporate Leaders, commented on the enormous changes in the way business acts and how companies increasingly sees climate issues as part of their businesses. Indeed, businesses are ready to close the remaining gap for achieving 2 degrees with voluntary measures in case national contributions are insufficient. CISL is a strong advocate of partnerships, where leaders inspire others, implementation is accelerated, and partners are able to work across borders and across supply chains.

Christiaan Prins, head of European External Affairs with Unilever, mentioned how not only improving environmental and social sustainability is increasingly becoming a business case, but also supporting sustainable development goals, where climate plays an important role. Mr. Prins presented the Unilever-Unicef partnership as an example: the target is to give access to lavatory facilities to 25 million people. So far 1,5 million have been reached, with Unilever's brand of cleaning products involved in the project benefitting greatly.

Bernard Mathieu, in charge of sustainable development for LafargeHolcim, made a strong case for pricing carbon everywhere and for the effective monitoring of national commitments. LafargeHolcim is committed to remaining the most CO2 efficient producer of cement. Already in 2009, Holcim partnered with the IEA and the WBCSD to publish the Cement Technology

Roadmap. The company is currently involved in the WBCSD's Low Carbon Technology Partnership initiative for the cement sector.

Finally, **Rainer Steffens**, director of the Representation of North Rhine-Westphalia presented NRW's climate protection policy, which aims at reducing CO2 emissions by 25% by 2020. The Climate Protection Act, which was adopted in 2013, looks at expanding the use of renewables and increasing resource and energy efficiency. Stakeholder participation is encouraged through a wide-scale dialogue and participation process. NRW partners with other regions in the Subnational Global Climate Leadership initiative.