

## **UN Address – May 26<sup>th</sup> – Final Hearings on the Post-2015 Agenda**

Your Excellency, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, it's a real privilege to speak here today, looking forward together, to the adoption of a new sustainable development agenda, for the world we want by 2030.

But before we look ahead, I want for a moment to look back. I was 15 at the time of the Millennium Declaration; since then we've seen enormous progress, albeit uneven in places: Halving the number of people living in extreme poverty, 2 billion people gaining access to safe drinking water, 90% of children in primary school.

Business has helped drive this progress. Connecting people. Building infrastructure. Generating employment.

Yet, business as usual has also come at great cost.

Unbridled market behavior created the biggest financial crises since the great depression, pushing 130million people back below the poverty line.

Inequalities have reached frightening levels; Oxfam estimates the wealth of the richest 1% will exceed the combined wealth of 99% of the human population next year.

At the same time we're witnessing a planetary emergency; the highest extinction rates since the dinosaurs. 60% of our ecosystems in decline, dangerous concentrations of GHGs in the atmosphere, with the resulting change in our climate already costing lives.

While there are myriad reasons we've arrived at this juncture, much of the blame rests with the principles and practices of 'business as usual'.

It's therefore no surprise why there's such mistrust of business in shaping the post-2015 agenda. Business has indeed been a big part of the problem. But we believe it can and must be part of the solution too.

After all in the developing world alone, business accounts for 60% of GDP, 80% of capital flow and 90% of job creation. For the world to change course, business needs to change course too.

A critical mass of businesses have already started to move.

They see sustainable development not only as a moral imperative, but as a commercial necessity. Whether it's the \$45 trillion worth of assets the OECD predicts to be at risk of flooding by 2050, or KPMG's prediction that places the entire profit of the food industry at risk by 2030.

One clear example of leadership is the We Mean Business coalition, which now represents more than 6 million companies, including The B Team, focused on taking bold climate action.

For these companies the business case is clear, from shipping lanes disrupted by extreme weather, to falling crop yields. As are the opportunities, from an internal rate of return of more than 20% on low-carbon investments, to the potential of creating 60 million jobs in the new climate economy. And, as the penny drops for more and more businesses, we're seeing a major shift in mindset.

Three-quarters of the worlds largest businesses have already set clear social and environmental goals, 4000 are reporting on CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, and 50 of the top 200 have set an internal price on carbon.

They have been joined by 350 global institutional investors representing over \$24 trillion in assets, calling for a stable, reliable and economically meaningful price on carbon and plans to phase out fossil fuels subsidies.

Just last week in Paris, companies like *Infosys*, Mars, Unilever and IKEA, affirmed their commitment to be powered by 100% renewable energy. Companies like Honda and Xerox have set emissions reduction targets in line with the science.

Companies like Aetna in the US, increasing the minimum wages of their lowest paid workers by over 30% to \$16 per hour, or Natura in Brazil, which is using it's business model to help restore the amazon and empower indigenous communities. The power of this agenda is that it's universal, and we need more companies to think this way.

That's why The B Team has called on governments to set an ambitious long-term goal in Paris – for a net-zero emissions economy by 2050.

A clear signal from Government can unleash innovation and entrepreneurship, inspiring businesses around the world, to help grow our economies within the boundaries set by nature, while lifting millions of people out of poverty.

Ambition is growing day to day, with each announcement and commitment. The global march toward sustainability will only grow stronger after September, and through Paris, as a countervailing force to traditional vested interests. It's a crucial part of a virtuous circle, where policy certainty unlocks investment potential, which brings costs down and catalyzes new solutions, which inspires greater ambition.

But in order to accelerate progress, we need to find clear ways for business to play a positive role:

1. We must build a compelling business case, to raise awareness of the risks of inaction and the opportunities that lie ahead.

2. We must establish clear metrics for companies, to measure their own progress against specific goals; this has already started, with leadership from the WBCSD, UNGC and GRI, but we need companies everywhere to help take these metrics to scale.

3. We need to forge coalitions of the willing, galvanizing companies and industries to advance specific goals by making clear commitments. Whether it's convening the pharmaceutical industry, to scale access to affordable medicine, or harnessing technology to provide sustainable energy for all.

Ultimately, to reach the SDGs, we need to build accountability for transforming business models at a global scale.

We can't reverse inequality without changing how business distributes value, we can't stop climate change, without companies valuing natural

capital; we can't achieve gender equality, without inclusive business models, that respect human rights.

These new approaches require business leaders with different mindsets and capabilities – women and men who can successfully build cross-sector coalitions, who are as familiar dealing with NGOs and policymakers as they are with customers and suppliers, and who are comfortable operating in a more volatile and complex environment. There are no blueprints for how to do this or roadmaps on how to navigate our way towards this brave new world. It will require unprecedented collaboration, concerted action by all of us.

My greatest hope, is that in a hundred years' time, when the historians look back on this period, they will see 2015 as the tipping point of the second great industrial revolution; A year which changed the course of history for the better; A year in which leaders from business, government and civil society worked with, not against each other, forging the foundation of a bright future, where no one was left behind, a world of sustainable, inclusive prosperity, for all.