

Leaders' Breakfast - CMS COP12

Moving towards a pollution-free planet

22 October 2017, Manila, The Philippines

The Leaders' Breakfast meeting was held on 22 October 2017 on the margins of the 12th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals (CMS) in Manila, The Philippines. The Breakfast brought together over 40 leading policymakers, including Ministers and Deputy Ministers, as well as leaders from the private sector and regional and global treaties.

The Breakfast meeting, which was organized by the Governance Affairs Office of UN Environment, in close collaboration with the CMS Secretariat, focused on Government and the private sector cooperating to address the most pervasive forms of pollution, concentrating on marine debris, and pesticide and lead ammunition pollution, as well as their impact on migratory species. Questions addressed included:

- How can policymakers and the private sector work together to tackle marine debris, as well as pollution from pesticides and lead ammunition?
- What is the private sector doing to address marine debris and pollution from pesticides and lead ammunition?
- What are the challenges and opportunities from both public and private sectors to tackle pollution?

Pollution is the theme of the 2017 UN Environment Assembly (4-6 December 2017, Nairobi, Kenya). As the highest-level UN decision-making body on the environment, the Environment Assembly will bring together Ministers of Environment, as well as environment leaders from the private sector and civil society, to take multi-level and multi-stakeholder decisions for a pollution-free planet.

The Leaders' Breakfast was one of a series of global meetings on the theme of pollution taking place in the run-up to the Environment Assembly. It addressed the over-arching question: 'How can policymakers and the private sector work together to make choices and transform business models so that the sustainability of the planet's natural resources is not compromised?'

Welcoming remarks

The Leaders' Breakfast meeting was facilitated by **Rico Hizon**, International Broadcast Journalist of BBC World News. The meeting was opened by His Excellency (H.E.) **Roy Cimatu**, Secretary of Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines. Mr Cimatu extended his greetings to the nearly 20 Environment ministers and senior policy makers, and 20 other high-level representatives of the private sector and International conventions.

He acknowledged that marine pollution had been a persistent problem and a growing concern for decades, and in The Philippines, it was understood that solving the problem involved addressing the issue at source. National policies included bills in Parliament since 2011, particularly regulating the use of plastic bags. A coastal conservancy organization had coordinated a national coastal clean-up, and this year the Philippine Government had approved a coastal and ecosystem management programme – a 20 year initiative to address the drivers of degradation of the marine environment. The Government was aware of the need

to develop synergies, partnerships and dialogue with the private sector and other organizations.

Ibrahim Thiaw, Assistant Secretary-General and Deputy Executive Director of UN Environment Programme also welcomed the distinguished participants. He emphasized the gravity of the pollution problem, remarking on the collapsing mountains of urban waste that in recent months had killed hundreds of people in two cities in Africa and one in Asia. Water was also being polluted on a massive scale, and in developing countries, 90% of waste water was dumped, untreated into rivers and the sea. About 13 million tons of plastic were discharged into the oceans each year. Pollution, particularly air pollution, had huge impacts on human health, and each year over 12 million people died of causes related to pollution and environmental degradation. That was the equivalent of three jumbo jets crashing every hour. He drew attention to the third session of the UN Environment Assembly in December, which he was convinced had the potential to be a turning point in the fight against pollution. He stressed that pollution was reversible, and we had to hope the next generation could remember it as history and not their current reality.

Bradnee Chambers, Executive Secretary of CMS, expressed his satisfaction that governmental and private sector actors were being brought together. He emphasized that CMS was working increasingly with the private sector in areas such as renewable energy, marine debris, tourism and lead ammunition poisoning. He recognized that there could be win-wins for both the environment and the economy, and CMS was paying attention to this. The question was not whether the private sector was relevant to the environment, but how to engage it in its protection. Governments needed to generate policy, and create incentives and the right operating environment. CMS had been working on lead ammunition poisoning, especially since establishing a Working Group on the subject in 2011. It was hoped to accelerate progress through a Resolution at the current COP to establish a Task Force involving the private sector. He concluded his statement by saying that marine debris and pesticide poisoning were the other main types of pollution currently being addressed by CMS, and wide cooperation and commitment were needed to ensure maximum success in working towards solutions.

Keynote presentation

Rico Hizon introduced the keynote speaker, **Peter Nitschke**, Philippines Development Manager for The Plastic Bank, who outlined the approach used by his organization to address the issue of plastic waste. He presented some eye-catching statistics, for example, each year, humanity produced its own weight in plastic, a high proportion of which was packaging which was thrown away. The value of this discarded plastic, which was lost to the global economy, was about 80-120 billion USD per year, which was twice the GDP of The Philippines. A high proportion of this plastic ended up in the world's oceans, and by 2050, it was estimated that the weight of plastic in the oceans would equal the weight of fish. Marine plastic was a major problem for wildlife, affecting all forms of sea life and, for example, killing over one million seabirds and 100,000 marine mammals every year.

He stated that in Metro Manila, one third of the waste was recyclable, but only 10% was actually recycled. This was a big opportunity, and this opportunity was amplified by economic approaches, which were changing from the linear to the circular model at an accelerating rate. The Plastic Bank saw pollution as a gigantic economic opportunity, the realization of which would change the planet.

Mr Nitschke outlined a number of private sector initiatives which were addressing environmental pollution. Companies involved included Unilever, and Proctor and Gamble,

working in the Philippines and Indonesia, as well as Europe, and his own company. The Plastic Bank was transforming plastic waste into income for the bottom of the social pyramid through training, collection, partnering, and the Social Plastic Ecosystem, a digital plastic tracking system. He stressed the relevance of the Plastic Bank's work to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, with 11 of the 17 goals being addressed. A number of activities were needed to ensure continuing progress, including:

- actions for policy makers and government decision makers,
- rigorous implementation of household waste segregation at source,
- increased public awareness,
- private-public partnerships to scale up facilities to process recycling,
- promotion of the circular economic model by lawmakers,
- funding mechanisms for environmental entrepreneurs,
- incentives for innovation in packaging & recycling, and
- incentives to use recycled materials.

Discussion

Rico Hizon emphasized the need for concrete pledges and commitments in the discussion that would feed into the CMS Conference of the Parties as well as the UN Environment Assembly.

Emeritus Zakri Abdul Hamid, Science Adviser to the Prime Minister of Malaysia, considered the biggest problem to be lack of political will, although the UN Sustainable Development Goals were a big step in the right direction. He considered that the large volume of data and information available on issues threatening the environment and biodiversity had not been adequately translated and interpreted for policy makers, the public sector and the general public. There were many Multilateral Environmental Agreements, but how many were being properly implemented? Implementation was the key. He proposed a dialogue of private-public partnership. There was a need for the private sector to participate much more fully.

Cristiana Pașca Palmer, Executive Secretary, Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity and former Minister of the Environment for Romania, concurred with Zakri Abdul Hamid, and agreed that political will and leadership were lacking. The Convention on Biological Diversity had a Strategic Plan for Biodiversity with 20 global biodiversity targets – the Aichi targets. Each country had a plan, and what was missing was implementation and political will. She praised Mr Nitschke's presentation about plastic waste, but said this approach was still not good enough. We needed to aim for zero waste, and this required innovation and entrepreneurship, especially with regard to packaging.

Marku Lamp, Deputy Secretary General for the Environment of Estonia, said that the Government of Estonia had been cleaning up nature in Estonia since 2008, with the involvement of 50,000 volunteers. Other countries had joined, and now 113 countries and over 60 million volunteers were involved in the action. There were plans to go global from 2018 onward.

Rita Schwarzelühr-Sutter, Parliamentary State Secretary, Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Building and Nuclear Safety of Germany, said that Germany was using the G7 presidency to promote an action plan with the 3R approach of reduce, re-use and recycle, stressing consumer involvement. The need for new consumer and production patterns and partnerships was also recognized. There was an opportunity to convert risks to business opportunities through recycling.

Georg Platzer, Country Manager of IKEA Philippines, emphasized that he spoke as a human being, a father and a friend as well as a representative of IKEA. He was shocked by what would happen if we do not change our behaviour. IKEA committed to sustainability 20 years ago, and had demonstrated that it was possible to have a healthy environment and good business at the same time. The company had achieved a high level of sustainability throughout its supply chains and was educating over a billion customers and 2 billion website visitors about the benefits of this approach. IKEA also did not use plastic bags in its stores. He gave the example of Croatia, where people had really been changing their lifestyles since IKEA entered the market in the country not long ago.

Stefan Leiner, Head of the Biodiversity Unit and acting Director for Natural Capital of the European Commission, emphasized the importance of good legislative frameworks to address pollution. The EU was preparing to play its part in the UN Environment Assembly. He then drew attention to a study from protected areas in Germany and the UK which showed that 80% of the biomass of insects had disappeared in the past 30 years. This should ring alarm bells. He then mentioned the importance of cooperation with the private sector and the research community to develop alternative ammunition to lead shot and bullets.

José Pedro de Oliveira Costa, National Secretary for Biodiversity, Ministry of Environment of Brazil, stressed the importance of connectivity between protected areas, and the need for improvements in communication with the public.

H.E. **Tarsicio Granizo Tamayo**, Minister of Environment of Ecuador, mentioned the growth of the Bio-economy approach in his country and stressed that green issues can be good for business. He also mentioned the big impacts of fishing waste on biodiversity in Ecuador, and said that the government was reviewing fishing methods in protected areas. Waste disposal was a local government responsibility in Ecuador, which introduced an additional layer of complexity when dealing with the issue. ***Ecuador was developing a National Development Plan with the aim of reducing illegal waste dumping by 20 to 25 %.***

Harlad Fries, Ambassador of Sweden in Manila, said that strong commitment was needed at all levels, and demonstrated the commitment of his Ministry, which in the autumn of 2017 had pledged 55 million euro to combat marine pollution. The Swedish Government had also committed 1.5 million euro during the Oceans Conference in New York in June 2017. At the recent Our Ocean meeting in Malta, the Swedish Government had committed a further 3.8 million euro to the International Union for Conservation of Nature, to assist Africa and the Pacific region in their efforts to reduce marine pollution.

James Njogu Head of Conventions at the Kenya Wildlife Service stressed that action was critical, and emphasized the need for better communication with the private sector. Cooperation between all sectors was needed to maximise effectiveness.

H E. **Barbara Thomson**, Deputy Minister of Environmental Affairs, South Africa, said it was important to adhere to the commitments of the second session of the UN Environment Assembly. It was a priority in her country to amend the Waste Policy Act.

Kosi Latu, Director-General of the Pacific Regional Environment Programme, noted that there was a disconnect between policy frameworks and what actually happened. An integrated approach between stakeholders was needed. Mr Nitschke's presentation had touched on key solutions – now there was a need to ensure that there was a coherent link with policy. He concluded with a call to bold action with a sense of urgency.

H.E. **Yeshey Dorji**, Minister of Agriculture and Forests of the Royal Government of Bhutan stressed the need to act locally. Bhutan was the only country ***committed to remain carbon***

neutral, or even carbon negative. Many plastic items had been banned from sale in the country and there were green taxes on potentially polluting products. The Department of Forests was working on waste management.

Hany Muhammed Ali Tatwany, Vice President, Saudi Wildlife Authority, said that his country had included the danger of pollution in its national environment strategy, to be endorsed before the end of 2017. This committed the government to a cleaner economy with recycling activities.

H.E. **Gamini Jayawickrama Perera**, Minister of Sustainable Development and Wildlife, Sri Lanka, emphasized the tradition in his country of respect for the environment. Actions taken recently included educating children about the ban on plastic bags, and the use of banana waste in packaging. Legislation had the aim of introducing green policies such as those of Bhutan.

Rico Hizon also asked for commitments from the private sector.

Georg Platzer from IKEA said that his company would begin operations in the Philippines in 2019-2020. He expected this to have the effect of educating customers about issues such as **reducing plastic waste pollution.**

Johnson Ongking from Pacific Paint Boysen, and President of the Philippine Association of Paint Manufacturers, said his company was leading in eliminating lead from paint in the Philippines, and was in a position to show other countries how this could be done. More than 120 countries still had no regulations on the use of lead in paints. **Boyson was committed to help UN Environment eliminate lead from paint by 2020.**

Edilberto de Luna of Croplife Philippines was **committed to reducing pesticide use in the country through a cascade of information to stakeholders.**

James Njogu from Kenya stressed the need to address the poisoning of vultures and queleas using pesticides. The use of pesticides to kill queleas even had human health implications.

Ramon Paje, UN Environment Assembly Bureau Member, mentioned the theme of the UN Environment Assembly which was 'towards a pollution-free planet.' He believed this was attainable, as demonstrated by the commitments of Sweden, and Costa Rica, whose electricity supply is now 99% renewable. He expected the use of electric cars to bring substantial reductions in air pollution in the coming years.

H.E. **Chan Somaly**, Deputy Secretary General, National Council for Sustainable Development, Cambodia, mentioned the issue of pesticide pollution from farms, especially near lakes, in her country. Farmers needed advice about the correct use of these chemicals. **The government was revising national legislation to improve pesticide use.** Cooperation was needed from the Private sector and internationally.

Conclusions

Ibrahim Thiaw of UN Environment recalled that the discussion had started with criticism of a lack of political will. However, political will was now growing. For example, Indonesia recently confirmed a one billion dollar investment from its own budget to combat pollution of the ocean. More than 30 countries had joined the Clean Seas campaign. The number one killer in pollution is air pollution, and there was a rapid transition to electric vehicles. Even Ethiopia was moving to clean public transport. The sheer variety of pollutants represented a challenge. There were more than 130,000 chemicals whose use was uncontrolled. Actions were not yet

adding up, because they were not yet well coordinated. He stressed that it would not be sufficient to go to Nairobi in December to participate in the UN Environment Assembly – action was needed where government, civil society and the private sector came together, where appropriate, through the creation of coalitions.

He emphasized that solutions did exist to this, one of the most pressing issues of our time, and it was vital that it was addressed by governments, the private sector and civil society working together.

The facilitator, **Rico Hizon**, committed himself to *raising awareness in his role in the global broadcasting network of the BBC*.

Key messages from the Breakfast include:

Better cooperation and communication

- There is a strong need for better coordination of actions - action is needed where government, civil society and the private sector come together;
- There are many existing plans, targets and other measures. Greater political will, resulting in better implementation of these measures, would solve many of the identified challenges;
- the large volume of data and information available on issues threatening the environment and biodiversity have not been adequately translated and interpreted for policy makers, the public sector and the general public;
- The public is enthusiastic about helping to address these challenges, as demonstrated in Estonia, and better communication can change attitudes and behaviour;
- Governments need to generate appropriate policy through sound legal frameworks, and to create incentives and the right operating environment for the private sector;
- Funding mechanisms for environmental entrepreneurs are needed, including incentives for innovation in packaging & recycling; and incentives to use recycled materials;
- The ultimate aim should be zero waste.

Better engagement by the private sector

- The question is not whether the private sector is relevant to the environment, but how best to engage it;
- New, innovative consumer and production patterns and partnerships such as the Plastic Bank can provide win-wins for both the environment and the economy;
- Modern economic models such as circular, rather than linear approaches to economic planning, and the bio-economy approach, should be enshrined in law and more widely adopted;
- Many businesses, such as IKEA, have demonstrated that it is possible to combine healthy environmental practices in a highly successful global business in the long term, and to raise awareness at the same time.