

Paul Polman, CEO Unilever

Rainforest Alliance 25th Anniversary Gala

Natural History Museum, London, 22 October

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great honour to speak to you this evening on the occasion of the 25 year anniversary of the Rainforest Alliance. I had the same pleasure in New York not long ago.

Almost exactly 25 years ago to the day - at the same time that the Rainforest Alliance was being formed - the people of this country were waking to one of the biggest storms ever to hit the UK and northern France.

A hurricane on an unprecedented scale caused death and widespread destruction. The environment suffered and so did the economy. Insured losses were estimated at between £4 and 7 billion in today's money.

While nothing quite on that scale has been repeated, we are all having to get used to extreme weather patterns.

It is a timely reminder of the increasingly fragile nature of the planet over which we are the temporary custodians. It is also a timely reminder of the need for more action and less talk.

Which is one of the many reasons why I am so pleased to be here this evening to mark the 25th anniversary of an organisation that has done - and is doing - so much to help provide a more sustainable future"

Over the past quarter of a century the RA has not only pioneered a vision of a more sustainable future but also developed the practical mechanisms to help deliver it.

Daniel Katz , Tensie and the whole team should be incredibly proud.

By providing farm, tourism and forestry enterprises with the financial incentives to manage their land sustainably, they have protected precious ecosystems; enhanced livelihoods and transformed the way crops are grown.

Most importantly perhaps, through its certification programme, the RA has brought sustainability to the mainstream consumer. Today, the 'little green frog' is widely recognised as a mark of ethical, responsible sourcing - providing people with the opportunity to consume differently - and to consciously engage in the creation of a better, more equitable future for all.

The RA has demonstrated what can be achieved when you work in partnership – when you reconcile the needs of communities with those of habitats; and champion solutions that recognise the interdependency of environmental, social and economic stability.

As you note in your 25th anniversary report “Protecting Our Planet”¹, today 15 percent of the global banana trade, 9.4 percent of the world’s tea and 3.3 percent of the global coffee trade originate from Rainforest Alliance Certified farms.

These are remarkable achievements – for which you should be very warmly congratulated. As the CEO of Unilever – which has worked with the RA since 2007 - I would also like to personally thank you for the part you have played in our journey to source all of our agricultural raw materials sustainably by 2020, an area where we are making excellent progress.

FOOD SECURITY

And yet – while we can all be rightly proud of some of the achievements of the past quarter of a century – it is increasingly clear that time is not on our side . We simply do not have another 25 years to secure the Earth’s future.

Despite excellent work from the RA and others, certified goods remain in the minority.

The vast majority of commodities are still produced without any guarantee of their sustainability.

While the Rainforest Alliance’s work ,to demonstrate the interdependency of people and their environment , has provided a glimpse of how humans

¹ http://www.rainforest-alliance.org/sites/default/files/publication/pdf/anniversary_120919_B.pdf

can live in harmony with the planet – we are still a long way from achieving this vision of sustainable living.

And as populations grow, as people around the world aspire to a better quality of life, as farmland becomes more degraded and the effects of climate change more pronounced;

the issues of food security, water scarcity and poverty will come into much sharper focus.

We now must build on our successes. We must use the tremendous momentum that the sustainable agriculture movement has created to scale up solutions and challenge a status quo where over 850 million people go hungry each day.

We know that the challenges are real, and stark, but also that through our continued and determined efforts, that success is possible.

THE CURRENT SYSTEM IS BROKEN

Indeed, to think otherwise would be an injustice. As the gap between rich and poor is growing ever wider – millions are left behind; struggling to earn a living and fulfill their everyday health and hygiene needs. In many areas, girls and women remain marginalized; children are denied education; human potential is left unrealized by a global system that still too much favours the few and not the many.

It seems that this age of humans – the Anthropocene as it is being called – is in danger of imploding – of combusting under the weight of our ever-growing population - our ever greater demands. That is why we must ask ourselves what can be done to redress the balance and to restore equilibrium.

For solutions - we must revisit the systems we have created to sustain ourselves; un-pick, from the tangle of our past, the tools that will take us forward.

As demonstrated by the 2008 financial crisis, the anger of the Arab Spring or the Occupy Wall Street movement, contemporary capitalism is in need of finetuning. Morally and ethically defunct – it has created huge extremes of wealth; significant debt for both individuals and governments; the creation of financial instruments which have questionable social value and the unsustainable use of scarce physical and natural resources.

We must harness the positive elements of capitalism – the energy, enterprise and creativity that has been directly responsible for lifting nearly half a billion people out of poverty, for revolutionising health and medical care and for the creation of digital technologies which are transforming the lives of people everywhere – and use these to create a new world order that provides for both the needs of growing populations and the health of the planet: A world order that realises the vision of living sustainably and equitably.

UNILEVER SUSTAINABLE LIVING PLAN

At Unilever, the challenge of doing business more responsibly – of giving to society rather than taking from it - has resulted in the creation of a new business model – the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan.

Spanning our entire portfolio of products and all the countries in which we operate, the Sustainable Living Plan sets out detailed actions to grow our brands, reduce costs, support our customers and open up new markets in a sustainable way.

Central to this vision is our commitment to take responsibility for our impact across our whole value chain – from the way we source our raw materials to our production methods and the way consumers use and dispose of our products. This is why our partnership with the Rainforest Alliance means so much to us.

We hope that by decoupling growth from environmental impact we will enable more people to benefit from the health, nutritional and hygiene benefits of our products without negatively impacting the planet. We also believe that by expanding our sourcing and distribution networks to engage more smallholder farmers and small-scale distributors, we will be able to support equitable development and build economic resilience in under-served communities.

ROLE OF WOMEN & TECHNOLOGY

And yet, despite our efforts to improve yields and incomes through RA certification we know we still have further to go to ensure that our

interventions help bring sustained change to the way people live their lives, feed their families and secure their futures.

One key to breaking the relentless cycle of poverty and underdevelopment is supporting the role of women in agriculture.

The FAO has recently published a report which highlighted the fact that 43% of agricultural workers in developing nations are women. Women have both the greatest responsibility and the fewest resources to ensure food for their communities.

Limited access to land, finance and training together with cultural factors constrain women's ability to produce and deliver adequate nutrition for their families. Yet all the evidence indicates that if these women had the same access to resources as their male counterparts they could increase yields on their farms by 20-30%, raise the total global agricultural output by 4% and thus reduce the number of hungry people in the world by 17%.

Alongside championing a more equitable role for women we must also provide the tools and resources to realise agricultural change. We must harness the latest technologies, whether mobile phones, irrigation systems or farm machinery to connect rural communities and better enable farmers to produce crops in a sustainable way.

ROLE OF GOVERNMENT

We must also ensure that governments play their part in delivering a sustainable future. At the Rio Earth Summit this year I saw how many now

question the ability of international negotiations to agree binding treaties on issues such as sustainable development and climate change, but we must not let them off the hook so easily.

Government engagement remains key to creating the enabling environment and the right incentives to drive systems change in the long term and there are indeed many political leaders who are making this a priority in their own countries, and we should applaud them for doing so.

We must continue to foster public-private partnerships – such as Unilever’s collaboration with the Tanzanian government and other businesses, to establish the Southern Agricultural Growth Corridor of Tanzania which aims to transform the area’s agricultural productivity. Only by working collaboratively, by harnessing the joint resources, reach and energy of the public and private sectors will we have the scale and impetus necessary to drive forward new models of sustainable production and consumption.

Industry-wide action – such as the Global Consumer Goods Forum’s commitment to end deforestation throughout the supply chain by 2020 is also vital and I was very pleased to be involved this year in the CGF’s agreement with the US Government to co-host a partnerships dialogue on public-private efforts to help realize this goal.

MDGs/SDGs

As a CEO, I know something about the importance of goals; of outlining a clear, measurable path to a target.

Goals form the basis of the Unilever Sustainable Living Plan. They focus our energy, challenging us each day to do better, and strive harder to enable our suppliers, our consumers, and our employees to build a more sustainable, equitable and inclusive future.

Over the last decade the Millennium Development Goals have provided a framework which has focused action on international development and poverty reduction. While success has been uneven, we must recognize the tremendous impact that this shared vision has had on progress, prompting collaboration between NGOs, governments and progressive companies towards making a real and tangible difference to people and their communities.

Earlier this year I was honoured to be asked by the United Nations Secretary General, Ban Ki-Moon, to join the High Level Panel which is reviewing the MDGs and where we need to go next. It is not an easy task to consider how a new set of goals might be structured in a way that takes account of all the urgent issues that now face us.

But what is clear to me is that we must all do more to recognize the intertwined nature of social, environment and economic sustainability:

- Poverty **cannot** be overcome while ignoring environmental degradation.
- Economic growth **cannot only** benefit the rich at the expense of the poor.

- Food and nutritional security **cannot only** be a matter of producing **more** food, but also ensuring that it is produced in a sustainable way **and** that it is distributed to those that need it most.

The need to understand more about the interconnectedness between our natural systems, and the place of humans in them, was one of the driving forces behind the early pioneers that created this impressive Natural History Museum and of those who subsequently worked to further its mission.

Today, the vision of the museum is to inspire better care of our planet, by advancing knowledge of the natural world.

Let us ensure that is also our vision - and that, by inspiring those around us, we reach the scale necessary to effect a sea change in the way we treat our planet and each other.

CLOSING REMARKS

All of you here tonight are here because you have played a part in the Rainforest Alliance's success to date, or because you will play part in its future, and for that I want to say thank you.

But I also want to appeal to you all to go further;

To push back the boundaries of what others say is possible and instead to focus on what is necessary if we are to truly deliver the Rainforest

Alliance's vision of a world where "people and the environment prosper together".

The challenge is great, but so is the opportunity. So let us not rest on our laurels. But instead, ladies and gentlemen, Let us begin tonight.

To paraphrase a line by the great British playwright George Bernard Shaw, and made famous by the US politician Robert F. Kennedy:

"Some people see the world as it is and ask: what can I do?"

Young people see the world as it could be and say: together we can

Thank you.