

BIG DEBATE

COMBINING ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF NATURAL RESSOURCES

[GE3]

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MAIN FINDINGS

The central issue in this large debate is the extent to which it is possible, desirable and/or necessary to reconcile economic development and sustainable management of natural resources. This problem is centered on a dynamic which is one both of the short and long term given that it faces a dual dimension which is both urgent and deep-rooted: that of the environmental crisis that humanity now faces at the beginning of the 21st century. The solutions that have been envisaged depend on a number of parameters, such as the degree to which awareness raising has taken place regarding the depth of the environmental question and the positions of different members of society, i.e. the interests and responsibilities of the different stakeholders, including among others private businesses, NGOs, trade unions, political parties, governments, etc. This is why some, including a former CEO and Chairperson of the Global Environment Fund, advocate for a slowing down of product consumption per inhabitant, whereas others, such as the CEO of Unilever-France call rather for tax incentives for private stakeholders.

SPEAKERS

Monique Barbut

Special Advisor to the General Director, UNIDO

Nicolas Hulot

Chairman, Nicolas Hulot Foundation
for Nature and Mankind

S.E. M. Carlos Naranjo Jativa

Ambassador of Ecuador to France

Bruno Witwoët

Chairman and CEO, Unilever France

MODÉRATOR

Caroline De Camaret

Journalist, Editor in Chief, Europe, France 24



IN PARTNERSHIP WITH

SUMMARY OF INTERVENTIONS

H.E. Mr. Carlos Jativa Naranjo firstly stresses that in 2008 the new Ecuadorian Constitution recognized the rights that are intrinsic to nature. It is in this context that an innovative proposal was put forward, the Yasuni – ITT Initiative, which is now fully operational and which aims to create a synergy between economic development and sustainable management of natural resources. The initiative consists of protecting the unique biodiversity of the Yasuni national nature reserve, considered a sanctuary of global biodiversity, by forbidding the drilling of three oil wells in order to avoid significant damage to the environment. The area has been given the status of "global public good", protecting its biodiversity and the atmosphere, given that 500,000,000 metric tons of CO₂ will not be emitted. Half of the 7.2 billion US dollars that Ecuador would have received for thirteen years of oil drilling will be paid in order to compensate for this loss, with an equivalent amount of money being put forward by the country itself and by other contributing countries, **particularly some of the world's main polluters, on the basis of the principal of shared but differentiated responsibility.** This project also brings in civil society (NGOs, etc.), both northern and southern countries as well as the UN. It will create sustainable local economic activity presented as an avant-garde development model – a post-extractive model based on "sumak kawsay", or rather a form of living which comes from the universal vision of the indigenous peoples.

According to Nicolas Hulot, human laws cannot be exempt from the laws of nature. Natural resources are not unlimited. The current economic model is based on the flow of materials. The crisis of modern civilization is a crisis of excess caused by a lack of sufficient limits. We therefore have to move from abundance to scarcity, a change which the political and economic spheres should anticipate. Out of the many possible solutions, one can highlight that of putting an end to financial speculation on natural resources, ambitious environmental and health standards, reducing energy consumption two, three or fourfold, transforming an economy of over-consumption into one of functionality (or rather leasing out goods as opposed to selling them), or a circular economy in which waste becomes a resource or indeed no longer exists, lengthening the lifespan of products, improving energy efficiency, creating a tax system with more incentives and aspects that can act as voluntary deterrents. In this way, countries in the Global North shoulder their responsibilities towards those in the Global South, and this will lead to a shift from free trade to fair trade.

Finally, an ecological transition creates employment, purchasing power and creativity.

Bruno Witwoët believes that climate change has a considerable impact on society, leaving it with no choice other than that of changing its consumption model, even though this cannot be applied in the same way in all countries. In order to achieve this, economic stakeholders need a regulatory framework which consists of restrictions and incentives which allow for long-term practices, bearing in mind that the second option is preferable since it can be a source of productivity and growth. Moreover, pioneers must set an example for all other actors to follow. Creating wealth and endowing society with responsibilities should not be opposed, but to the contrary, convergences among NGOs and private companies should be created despite the difficulties. In accordance with this outlook, Unilever created the "Unilever Plan for Sustainable Lifestyles" in collaboration with NGOs and other public stakeholders, consisting of quantified and precise objectives to be attained in order to fulfill three major ambitions by the year 2020: to improve the health and wellbeing of one billion people, to halve the environmental impact of its products and to source 100% of its agricultural raw materials in a sustainable manner.

According to Monique Barbut, our system is one of **excessive consumption, whereby the planet's raw materials are mined at a much faster rate than they are produced (we consume the equivalent of one and a half planet Earth's natural resources per year).** Since she is convinced that economic stakeholders practicing self-regulation in the interests of all is not sufficient and that the sum of individual interests is not tantamount to the overall interest, she highlights the crucial role that politics plays in establishing an economic model for green growth, as does Nicolas Hulot. A paradigm shift should be brought about in particular by educating people to reduce purchases of high consumption goods, by providing economic incentives for recycling, by setting a monetary value for natural resources and by changing the focus of development indices, moving them away from work productivity towards a focus on ecological performance. It must be underlined that on this point, wealthy countries have the responsibility to set an example. South Korea has shown itself to be a pioneer in this area, becoming the first country in the world to radically change its economic model by setting up a programme which works on a five-yearly basis,

working towards green growth by setting aside 2% of GDP for environmental actions.

SUMMARY OF AUDIENCE EXCHANGE

To what extent can we be sure that the oil reserves of the Yasuni National Nature Reserve will not be exploited?

H.E. Mr. Carlos Naranjo Jativa answers first of all that 87% of the population is in favour of this plan for not drilling for oil. Whatsmore, agreements with the UNDP are being signed which specifically act as guarantee certificates saying that the oil will not be exploited.

What are the links between the sovereign debt crisis, the financial crisis and the environment?

According to Monique Barbut, the climate crisis often fatally leads to the answer that "solutions are too expensive". Nonetheless, significant decisions have been

taken to deal with the financial crisis, meaning that the financial resources do exist and could very well be mobilized in order to fight against the environmental crisis.

How could convergence partnerships be thought up for linking the different sectors in society (private/trade unions/NGOs, etc.) in order to improve the sustainability of human lifestyles?

Bruno Witwoët highlights the fact that the Witwoët Unilever Foundation has set up financial partnerships with OXFAM, Unicef and other NGOs. The important factor is placing these societal and environmental questions at the heart of its business strategy. The **organization's** staff, distributors and suppliers in particular will have to get involved in this subject.

Nicolas Hulot believes that convergences among public and private stakeholders are absolutely essential since no solution can emerge from a clash between the two. Whatsmore, both have different demands and points of view which one has to know how to respect.

REPORTER

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MORE ON THIS TOPIC

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- François A., Thibaud B. (2010) *Systèmes de production et durabilité dans les pays du Sud*. Paris: Karthala.
- Yasuni ITT : yasuni-itt.gob.ec/inicio.aspx