

OPENING SESSION

OPENING SESSION OF THE 5th EDITION OF THE WORLD FORUM CONVERGENCES 2015

[OS]

Grand Auditorium
Palais Brongniart

Wednesday,
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MAIN FINDINGS

A number of crises are currently afflicting the world simultaneously: poverty and unstable living conditions in countries in the Global North and South, the financial crisis and economic stagnation, as well as the increasing scarcity of natural resources. Convergences 2015 has the aim of pulling down the obstacles that stand between all those who work on alleviating poverty in the world. Microfinance and social entrepreneurship, which up until now have been marginal, are called upon to play a central role in this context. After putting out the Paris Appeal for Responsible Microfinance in 2011, Convergences 2015 is lengthening and broadening the reach of this Appeal, which is to become the Global 2012 Appeal, and is now launching a New Paris Appeal within the context of the redefining of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), a process which is opening this year.

SPEAKERS

Jean-Louis Bancel

Chairman, Crédit Coopératif Group

Christophe Caillaud-Joos

General Manager, Palais Brongniart

Alain Juppé

Former Prime Minister, France / Mayor of
Bordeaux

Michel Rocard

Former Prime Minister of France / Ambassador of
France for International Negotiations on the
Arctic and Antarctic

Frédéric Roussel

Co-founder, ACTED / Founder, Convergences 2015

Dov Zerah

CEO, French Development Agency (AFD)

MODERATOR

Jean-Michel Severino

Chairman, Convergences 2015 / CEO, Investisseurs
& Partenaires

SUMMARY OF INTERVENTIONS

Jean-Michel Severino greets the more than 300 speakers and 3,500 participants that are expected. He speaks about the meaning behind Convergences 2015, a social enterprise that has the aim of pulling down the obstacles between those who are fighting against poverty both in the Global North and South, while bringing together private business, those working in administration and politics, social enterprises, NGOs, trade unions and charity associations. The World Forum Convergences 2015 is an arena in which the social economy is honoured. Last year, it launched the *Paris Appeal for Responsible Microfinance* which was lengthened and broadened this year in order to become the *Global Appeal*. A *New Paris Appeal* has also been launched in order to contribute to the redefinition of the Millennium Development Goals.

Christophe Caillaud-Joos welcomes the participants to the Paris Stock Exchange, a venue which has been devoted to innovation since its inception. This location is also one of a partnership between public and private sectors, since the management of the Exchange has been entrusted to a private group, GL Event, by its public owner, Paris City Hall.

Alain Juppé explains that he has organised his activities as mayor around three pillars, one of them being a social project, since an analysis carried out in 2009 showed that a quarter of the population of Bordeaux was living below the poverty line of 800 euros per month. His programme as mayor aimed to drive back poverty and progress in fraternity, using a joint method bringing together all partners involved: government, local and regional authorities, family allowance funds, charity associations and local inhabitants. Roughly one hundred schemes have also been launched, such as self-portrait sessions, shared gardens, housing self-rehabilitation programmes, the setting up of a committee for combating discrimination, a storage area for use by the homeless, etc. This programme has highlighted the strong resistance to change that exists but has also borne witness to great generosity and a great capacity for mobilisation. Bordeaux also leads actions for decentralised cooperation with Casablanca, Bamako and Ouagadougou in particular.

Michel Rocard points out that not only should one fight against poverty but also the system that creates it, a system which is currently going through crisis. This is a triple-faceted crisis: there is firstly the banking and financial crisis which began in 2007/2008, which is accompanied by stagnation in many countries and a reduction in lending between banks; secondly, the emergence of job insecurity and the fact that unemployment and poverty have become long-term phenomena in the Global North over the past 30 years and thirdly, the need to come to terms with nature and the limits on non-renewable resources. The marginal drive against this led by social entrepreneurship must break free from its marginalisation and become a central fight, since social entrepreneurs have a roadmap for the solution; as opposed to closing themselves off by trying to correct the system, they must come forward, announcing new paradigms.

Jean-Louis Bancel explains that Crédit Coopératif, a fully-fledged bank set up almost 120 years ago, works closely with the social and solidarity economy. It is the bank of those who want to "shake up their world". As a matter of fact, 2012 is the International Year of Cooperatives, which is bringing together a billion people, the Congress of which will soon be opened in Manchester. More particularly, Crédit Coopératif has set up the CoopEst project for Central Europe and CoopMed for the Mediterranean rim, and is currently looking into another project for setting up a global fund for developing cooperatives.

Dov Zerah notes that in 2011, the AFD (French Development Agency), made up a third of public development aid and two thirds of bilateral aid. The AFD works through partnerships which are different depending on the geographical area. Its priorities are: Sub-Saharan Africa (77% of donations and interest reduction schemes), where the focus is placed on agriculture, infrastructure, education and health; the Mediterranean rim, where there is a need to create jobs, to help people with employability, to reduce local inequalities and to improve the living conditions of local populations; and finally Asia and Latin America, where there are considerable goals for sustainable development. Development stakeholders are facing three races against time: demographic growth, urban growth and the increasing scarcity of non-renewable natural resources. Faced with these challenges, the AFD

is focusing on sustainable development in partnership with other stakeholders, such as charity associations, NGOs and local authorities, thus allowing civil society to be strengthened.

Frédéric Roussel explains that the observation that the three crises presented by Michel Rocard are all about to collide head-on has been the impetus for creating Convergences 2015. Faced with ongoing poverty in the Global South, scarce resources and the growing inability of countries in the North to finance their social protection systems, it seemed there was a need for finding other solutions. Convergence among stakeholders has emerged as a likely blueprint for a new system, the creation of which is inevitable. Convergences 2015 has spread from the domain of microfinance into all innovative approaches which aim to alleviate poverty and insecure living conditions around the world. From its inception it has developed along the lines of following an ambitious strategy of co-construction of

the common good and a modest approach of uniting already existing initiatives. Convergences 2015 has been progressively transforming itself into a think-tank in order to provide innovative initiatives to decision makers. *The Paris Appeal* launched last year is to become the *Global Appeal*; it has been signed by the largest microfinance organisations and has also been launched in Washington. Finally, Convergences 2015 is putting itself forward this year to take part in redefining the Millennium Goals, which will become a broadened set of objectives, also dealing with the environment and the Global North.

In conclusion, **Jean-Michel Severino** points out that if there exists a common good, a common interest, no organisation is responsible for managing it, therefore it needs to be co-constructed starting from the bottom.

REPORTER

Priscilla de Moustier

President of the surveillance council, OXUS Group

MORE ON THIS TOPIC

- **Convergences 2015, vers la co-construction d'un nouveau monde !**
www.youphil.com/fr/article/05674-convergences-2015-vers-la-co-construction-d-un-nouveau-monde?ypcli=ano
- **The Global Appeal for Responsible Microfinance:**
www.convergences2015.org/Content/biblio/Global%20Appeal%20EN%20final.pdf
The New Paris Appeal for the Future Development Goals, Aiming at a Sustainable and Equitable Development:
- www.convergences2015.org/Content/biblio/New%20Paris%20Appeal%20ENG.pdf
- **Millennium Developmen Goals:** www.unmillenniumproject.org/goals/index.htm