

ERIK SOLHEIM

Policy Leadership

With two cabinet posts under his stewardship, Norway's Minister of Environment and Minister of Development Erik Solheim is putting the environment at the forefront of European politics. As a strong advocate of the integral relationship between environment and development, he has been a key supporter of environmental actions at national and global levels throughout his political career. Solheim spearheaded the early implementation of REDD – Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation – with a grant of US\$ 500 million annually. He also paved the way for Norway's membership in UNEP's Climate Neutral Network, catalyzing his country's action towards a low carbon society.

RON GONEN

Entrepreneurial Vision

Recycling mogul Ron Gonen saw opportunity in a very unusual place – trash. The environmental entrepreneur's brainchild, RecycleBank, is an environmental rewards and loyalty company that helps people turn their recyclable garbage into cash. Under RecycleBank's scheme, families that recycle earn points which they can redeem for essentials at over 1,400 local and national retailers. Since its launch in 2004, the initiative has been an unqualified success, expanding into 18 states across the US. Increase in recycling rates to as high as 90 per cent have been recorded in some neighborhoods. And RecycleBank has been very well received by the private sector – Gonen's company attracted a \$2 million investment from Coca-Cola as part of the beverage giant's effort to promote recycling. In Gonen's own words, "The core of RecycleBank is the ability to target and market to a captive audience that feels good about what they are doing".



KEVIN CONRAD

Policy Leadership

"We seek your leadership, but if for some reason you are not willing to lead, leave it to the rest of us. Please get out of the way." Kevin Conrad's words to the United States delegation – which was one of the key hold-outs on plans for a post-2012 treaty – are widely remembered as a key pivotal moment of the 2007 Bali climate change talks. Significantly, the resulting Bali Action Plan was the first time the role of tropical forests and deforestation in tackling global warming was officially recognized. Now as Executive Director of the Coalition of Rainforest Nations, Conrad is campaigning to better align market incentives with the sustainable use and management of tropical forests. Things are starting to move – the UN recently established the UN-REDD programme, which aims to help developing nations fight deforestation and receive funds through the sale of tradable carbon credits. Meanwhile, Norway is now putting serious money into fighting deforestation, pledging \$1 billion for Brazil's Amazon protection fund through 2015. These are just some of the initiatives that are currently mobilizing some of the largest sums in history to support rainforest conservation. Conrad, who is from Papua New Guinea, continues to campaign tirelessly to find ways for the international community to provide incentives for conserving rainforests.

JANINE BENYUS

Science and Innovation

Janine Benyus, a pioneer and champion of the biomimicry movement, is at the helm of the eco-design revolution. Her 1997 book *Biomimicry: Innovation Inspired by Nature* inverts the way we all think about design, advocating that we draw design inspirations from nature's wisdom and adopt nature's processes to solve some of our challenges. As the President of the Biomimicry Institute in Montana, Benyus has been consulting with sustainable business, academic and government leaders on what we can learn from nature's genius. The key idea is to draw inspiration from nature's clever designs and treat nature as model and mentor, cherished as a teacher – not as a mine to be stripped of its resources.

TENA KEBENA

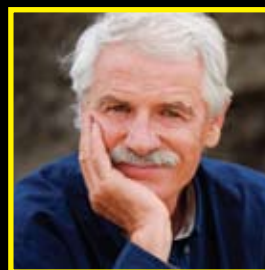
Next-Generation Champions

The Next-Generation Champions category was created to celebrate the new generation of dynamic, passionate individuals and organizations around the world who are making a real difference for the environment. There could be few more inspiring examples of this than Tena Kebena, an organization in Ethiopia that brings together around 80 children and youth, many of whom have been orphaned by the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The group cleans up and rehabilitates garbage dumpsites around the city of Addis Ababa through reforestation, turning mountains of trash into hills green with trees, herbs and flowers. The sites are also used for urban agriculture – on what used to be a waste pile, the young gardeners are churning out lush rows of vegetables through organic methods and waste water collection. And in this beautifully sustainable cycle, agricultural produce and herbal medicines grown from the urban farm are sold to provide funding for the project and for the children's learning activities.

TULSI TANTI

Entrepreneurial Vision

Tulsi Tanti is the Chairman and Managing Director of Suzlon Energy, the fifth largest wind turbine manufacturer in the world and the largest in Asia. Widely referred to as India's 'Wind Man', Tanti is credited for advocating to fellow industrialists, the environmental and economic advantages of staying off the power grid. The company was a true precursor, exploring wind energy in the late 1990s as an alternative to costly and erratic electricity supply to its textile business. Realizing that wind was not just the answer to Suzlon's energy needs but could also fuel the growth of other industries, the company sold off its textile manufacturing and entered the relatively new field of wind-turbine generators. With the price of oil recently hitting an unprecedented high, Tanti believes that wind is the energy of the future and Suzlon intends to help launch this industry into the mainstream. "Yes, green business is good business," says Tanti. "But it's not just about making money. It's about being responsible." Suzlon's main factory, in the southeastern Indian city of Pondicherry, runs exclusively on wind power and collects rainwater to tend to its grounds.



YANN ARTHUS-BERTRAND

Inspiration and Action

Through his breathtaking aerial photographs from the remotest parts of the globe, French photographer Yann Arthus-Bertrand has helped people around the world see our planet in a new light – beautiful, fragile, threatened. His iconic books have moved millions and a public art exhibition the 'Earth From Above', which premiered in Paris in 2000 to unprecedented success, went on to travel to cities around the world. By 2008, over 130 million people on every continent had visited the exhibit. The images are a stark call to action, combining vivid images of the beauty and vulnerability of our planet with detailed captions describing the environmental pressures it is under. In 2005, Arthus-Bertrand formed GoodPlanet.org, an environmental organization whose objective is to educate about sustainable development and urge individuals across every culture and background to think about the future of all of our planet's inhabitants. Through GoodPlanet.org, Arthus-Bertrand worked with the French Ministries of Education and Environment to produce 22 educational posters on sustainable development featuring his aerial photos. The posters were given out for free to every school in France. Arthus-Bertrand is now preparing a feature-length film about our planet which will be distributed around the globe on World Environment Day.