



Blue
Planet
Prize

News Release

February 20, 2012

Top scientists urge end to policy and governance failures to tackle social and environmental crises

Top scientists will tomorrow (20 February) urge governments to replace GDP as a measure of wealth, end damaging subsidies, and transform systems of governance to set humanity on a new path to a better future -- or risk climate, biodiversity and poverty crises that will spawn greater problems worldwide.

These are among the messages from a new paper by 20 past winners of the Blue Planet Prize – an international environmental award.

Bob Watson, the UK's chief scientific advisor on environmental issues and a winner of the prize in 2010, will present the paper to government ministers from around the world at the UN Environment Programme's governing council meeting in Nairobi, Kenya on 20 February.

"The current system is broken," says Watson. "It is driving humanity to a future that is 3-5°C warmer than our species has ever known, and is eliminating the ecology that we depend on for our health, wealth and senses of self."

"We cannot assume that technological fixes will come fast enough. Instead we need human solutions. The good news is that they exist but decision makers must be bold and forward thinking to seize them."

Watson's co-authors include James Hansen of NASA, Emil Salim, former environment minister of Indonesia, Susan Solomon of the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration and José Goldemberg, who was Brazil's Secretary of Environment during the Rio Earth Summit in 1992.

Their paper comes ahead of the 20th anniversary of that summit – the Rio+20 conference in June this year – when world leaders have an opportunity to set human development on a new, more sustainable path.

The paper urges governments to:

- Replace GDP as a measure of wealth with metrics for natural, built, human and social capital -- and how they intersect.
- Eliminate subsidies in sectors such as energy, transport and agriculture that create environmental and social costs, which currently go unpaid.
- Tackle overconsumption, and address population pressure by empowering women, improving education and making contraception accessible to all.

- Transform decision making processes to empower marginalised groups, and integrate economic, social and environmental policies instead of having them compete.
- Conserve and value biodiversity and ecosystem services, and create markets for them that can form the basis of green economies.
- Invest in knowledge -- both in creating and in sharing it -- through research and training that will enable governments, business, and society at large to understand and move towards a sustainable future.

“Sustainable development is not a pipe dream,” says Camilla Toulmin, director of the International Institute for Environment and Development. “It is the destination the world’s accumulated knowledge points us towards, the fair future that will enable us to live with security, peace and opportunities for all. To get there we must transform the ways we manage, share and interact with the environment, and acknowledge that humanity is part of nature not apart from it.”

Achim Steiner, UN Under-Secretary General and UNEP Executive Director, said: “The paper by the Blue Planet laureates will challenge governments and society as a whole to act to limit human-induced climate change, the loss of biodiversity and the degradation of ecosystem services in order to ensure food, water energy and human security. I would like to thank Professor Watson and colleagues for eloquently articulating their vision on how key development challenges can be addressed, emphasizing solutions; the policies, technologies and behaviour changes required to grow green economies, generate jobs and lift people out of poverty without pushing the world through planetary boundaries.”

The full paper will be ready for media around 5pm (UK time) on Friday – to request a copy email one of the following:

Tetsuro Yasuda (The Asahi Glass Foundation, Japan) yasuda@af-info.or.jp

Shereen Zorba (UNEP, Kenya) shereen.zorba@unep.org

Mike Shanahan (IIED, UK) mike.shanahan@iied.org

Patricia Yakabe Malentaqui (Conservation International, USA) p.malentaqui@conservation.org

NOTES TO EDITORS

The Blue Planet prize laureates who contributed to the paper are (in no special order):

- **Professor Sir Bob Watson**, Chief Scientific Adviser of the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra)
- **Lord (Robert) May of Oxford**, former Chief Scientific Adviser to the UK Government and President of Royal Society of London
- **Professor Paul Ehrlich**, Stanford University
- **Professor Harold Mooney**, Stanford University
- **Dr Gordon Hisashi Sato**, President, Manzanar Project Corporation
- **Professor José Goldemberg**, secretary for the environment of the State of São Paulo, Brazil and Brazil’s interim Secretary of Environment during the Rio Earth Summit in 1992

- **Dr Emil Salim**, former Environment Minister of the Republic of Indonesia
- **Dr Camilla Toulmin**, Director of the International Institute for Environment and Development
- **Mr Bunker Roy**, Founder of Barefoot College
- **Dr Syukuro Manabe**, Senior Scientist, Princeton University
- **Dr Julia Marton-Lefevre**, Director-General of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature
- **Dr Simon Stuart**, Chair of the Species Survival Commission of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature
- **Dr Will Turner**, Vice President of Conservation Priorities and Outreach, Conservation International
- **Professor Karl-Henrik Robèrt**, Blekinge Institute of Technology, Founder of The Natural Step
- **Dr James Hansen**, NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies
- **Lord (Nicholas) Stern of Brentford**, Professor, The London of Economics
- **Dr Amory Lovins**, Chair and Chief Scientist, Rocky Mountain Institute
- **Dr Gene Likens**, Director of the Carey Institute of Ecosystem Studies
- **Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland**, former Prime Minister of Norway and Director-General of the World Health Organization, now Special Envoy on Climate Change for UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon.
- **Dr. Susan Solomon**, Senior Scientist, Aeronomy Laboratory, National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
- **M. S. Swaminathan Research Institute**

ABOUT THE BLUE PLANET PRIZE

In 1992, the year of the Rio Earth Summit, the Asahi Glass Foundation established the Blue Planet Prize, an award presented to individuals or organizations worldwide in recognition of outstanding achievements in scientific research and its application that have helped provide solutions to global environmental problems.

The Prize is offered in the hopes of encouraging efforts to bring about the healing of the Earth's fragile environment. A full list of its past winners is online [here](#).

The award's name was inspired by the remark "the Earth was blue," uttered by the first human in space, Russian cosmonaut Yuri Gagarin, upon viewing our planet. The Blue Planet Prize was so named in the hopes that our blue planet will be a shared asset capable of sustaining human life far into the future.

2012 is the 20th anniversary of the Blue Planet Prize. The Asahi Glass Foundation wishes to mark this anniversary with a fresh start in its efforts to help build an environmentally friendly society.

Contact Information:

The Asahi Glass Foundation: 2nd Floor, Science Plaza, 5-3 Yonban-cho, Chiyoda-ku, Tokyo 102-0081 Japan

Secretary General Tetsuro Yasuda (Mr.) TEL: 03-5275-0620 FAX:
03-5275-0871 e-mail : yasuda@af-info.or.jp URL : <http://www.af-info.or.jp>