

World needs to check itself - Trevor Manuel

 By [Sandy Peters](#)

16 May 2016

On Sunday, 15 May, Trevor Manuel delivered the opening keynote address at the inaugural [Sustainable Brands Cape Town](#) conference currently underway at the Century City Conference Centre.



Trevor Manuel at Sustainable Brands Cape Town

One of the first proponents of sustainability reporting since the United Nations adopted the standards of the triple bottom line accounting framework in 2007, Manuel remains a cheerleader for the cause. He stressed that the reporting system which draws attention to the environment in which business is conducted remains a huge step forward.

"We continue to have a responsibility to ensure that the practice and metrics remain current and that each and every loophole is closed. We must also work hard to broaden the discussion and the ownership of the work and outputs, and to create new frontiers where development checks itself. This is necessary, if only because resources are finite," said Manuel.

World needs to check itself

Referring to a recent report titled, [How to make green growth the new normal](#), he commented that as demand for resources grows, resulting in an ever-expanding supply, the world needs to check itself. He also advised that companies seeking to operate sustainably need to start asking themselves tougher questions.

"My plea is that we think about the mode of sustainability accounting differently and recognise that if the only achievement is a contest to see how many boxes a corporation can tick in a particular column, then the endeavour for sustainability would have floundered on the sharp pencil of the accountant," said Manuel.

Issues of justice

Beyond the accounting and the accords - Manuel emphasised - are issues of social justice expressed as intergenerational responsibilities. Questions of sustainability need to be discussed outside the boardroom, and these discussions need to be more inclusive by integrating the poor, as well as the youth, in revaluing the future.

Referring to the [report produced by the Oxford Martin Commission for Future Generations](#), Manuel concluded his keynote

session, “We must invest in the youth to ensure that we can enlarge the cadre of critical thinkers, who will engage in action against environmental degradation. Your efforts at working for sustainability will, I am afraid, come to nought if societies remain as grotesquely unequal as they are in most countries. Not only are the poor excluded from market access, they also feel excluded from the discussions we have about the future. As part of building an understanding of a sustainable future we must work to counteract the sense of despair and alienation that consumes the being of too many people. An informed youth is the key to sustainable development.”

Trevor Manuel is a former minister in SA government. He led the crafting of the National Development Plan. Manuel currently holds several non-executive board positions, including a directorship of SABMiller, and is chair of the Old Mutual non-executive board. Manuel is also the founder of the Mitchell's Plain Bursary and Role Model Trust.

For more info on the Sustainable Brands Conference, [click here](#).

ABOUT SINDY PETERS

Sindy Peters (@sindy_hullaba_lou) is a group editor at Bizcommunity.com on the Construction & Engineering, Energy & Mining, and Property portals. She can be reached at sindy@bizcommunity.com

- 2022 Lesedi Award winner Faeza Marshman on what drives her giving spirit - 9 Dec 2022
- #ESGAfricaConference: Why integrating the environmental and social components of ESG is key - 3 Nov 2022
- #ESGAfricaConference: ESG an opportunity for purposeful shareholder engagement - 1 Nov 2022
- #ESGAfricaConference: Success in ESG starts with leadership, partnerships and good governance - 31 Oct 2022
- #ESGAfricaConference: What should ESG reporting look like in Africa? - 26 Oct 2022

[View my profile and articles...](#)

For more, visit: <https://www.bizcommunity.com>