

Defy rules to save environment

Dr Gunter Pauli, author of the book *Blue Economy* and keynote speaker at the 2014 Global Summit of the World Student Environmental Network (WSEN) currently being held in Stellenbosch, told delegates earlier this week that doing "less bad" is not good enough.

Dr Pauli was an engaging speaker who said that humans are failing to protect the environment. He said the world needs people to bend and defy the rules because this is the only way to bring about change.



YouTube: Dr Gunter Pauli speaks at WSEN2014

Close to 80 student delegates from across the globe are gathered in Stellenbosch for the first WSEN Global Summit to be held in a developing country. The summit (which ends on Friday, 4 July) is hosted by Stellenbosch University (SU) with sponsorship of the Department of Environmental Affairs and the SU's Frederik Van Zyl Slabbert Institute for Student Leadership Development, the SU's Postgraduate and International Office as well as the Sustainability Initiative.

Pauli was critical of shale gas exploration, the increasing use of genetically modified organisms (GMO) and the continuous drive to improve technologies rather than improving business models.

He told the audience that one of his companies, the first ecological factory, used palm oil to produce biodegradable soap. But when he realised the natural habitat of the orangutan is being destroyed in the harvesting of palm oil, he immediately started looking for alternatives because he realised his soap might be environmentally friendly but it wasn't sustainable.

"It is not acceptable doing good here while doing bad elsewhere."

He urged delegates to think innovatively about how products are used. He said that coffee waste is used by his companies in the cultivation of mushrooms, in textile production and in animal feed. Coffee waste is also used by a well-known outdoor-shoe manufacturer.

"We often do not need feasibility studies and audits to make things happen. I say throw away business plans because they kill initiative."

One of his main arguments is that we should change our business models and use what we have. "We should make an inventory of possibilities rather than analyse our problems."

He described the so-called green economy as expensive and subsidised, bringing with it taxes and cost-cutting. On the other hand he argues that the blue economy is innovative and competitive, creates jobs and adds value.

"Set targets, define strategies and inspire children," was his message in a nutshell. "Because if we only teach our children what we know, they won't do any better".

To invest in the lives of future generations

Someone who understood the fact that we should support the initiatives of young people whilst making sure that we invest in the lives of future generations is the late Prof Russel Botman, said Dr Leslie van Rooi, Head: FVZS Institute.

Dr Van Rooi welcomed delegates and also paid tribute to Prof Botman, Rector and Vice-Chancellor of SU, who passed away over the weekend.

He told delegates about Prof Botman's vision that Stellenbosch University should move from success to significance and his belief that SU must invest in society.

He quoted Prof Botman as saying: "The realisation is on the increase worldwide that mankind must show greater circumspection in dealing with the limited natural resources available to us. We should do less damage to the environment, reduce our wastage - our ecological footprint must become smaller."

According to Dr Van Rooi, Prof Botman realised the role the current generation should play in creating a better reality for generations to come.

"You are the people who will have to lead the world in this century. My generation caused the hole in the ozone layer and your generation will have to close it up. My generation started wars and your generation will have to make peace. You will have to have stronger values than we had, and the will to lose money for a better world and when you make money, to use it to improve your world. You will have to be different. You will have to be the best," he quoted Botman.

Other speakers during the summit include Eve Annecke, Director of the Sustainability Institute in Stellenbosch, Edgar Pieterse, Director of the African Centre for Cities and Dave Pepler, South African environmentalist who is well known for his nature programme *Groen* on TV.

Previous summits were held in Japan, Sweden, Switzerland, Germany and Canada.

Other summit highlights

- Later today, from 14:30 to 17:00 PM, trees will be planted at two schools in the adjacent suburb of Cloetesville. The community project will also include the painting of murals and improvements to the playground of the schools.
- A sustainability expo is being held in the Visual Arts building in Victoria Street, where a number of companies and organisations are showcasing their green initiatives and products to the public.

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