

# Crisis is catalyst – Planet future meeting sees hope and opportunity

Friday, 31 October 2008

Lund, Sweden – An international scientific top meeting on the Planet's future through 2050 concluded with a combination of bad and good news. "The bad news is that the challenge is enormous. There are accelerating problems of unsustainable trends in every aspect of the earth system," said Dr. Jill Jäger, senior researcher at the Sustainable Europe Research Institute. "There is an urgent need to deal with the problems in a more holistic way. The good news is that there is a window of opportunity at present."

The diverse group of experts, from natural scientists to business leaders, came from 22 different nations in an exploratory workshop, with four sub-groups on land-use, energy technology, economy/culture, and interchanges with the Earth system.

A consensus emerging from the meeting was that human society is moving dangerously beyond the carrying capacity of the planet, in a striking parallel to the financial debt crisis. "We're running the planet like a subprime loan," said Dr. Johan Rockström, Executive Director of the Stockholm Resilience Center. Yet researchers here warn that the consequences of the breakdown of the ecological system will be far worse in a just slightly longer time frame. Any new global economic agreements must therefore fix resource sustainability problems at the same time.

An example of the dire environmental news is that fresh measurements show actual carbon emissions increasing faster than the most pessimistic of the IPCC projections from just 5 and 10 years ago.

The experiment of working together across a wide range of complementary disciplines was deemed successful. "It was not always easy but at the end we came to some important consensus points," says Dr. Guy Brasseur, a Coordinator Lead Author on the recent IPCC Assessment and Associate Director at the US National Center for Atmospheric Research, and also one of the summit's initiators.

"This meeting was the start of a process that will influence the development of existing and new international scientific programs to much more recognize the interaction between the human and the natural system. In that way, this could be the first step of an interdisciplinary dialogue that has consequences for the evolution of society, education and research."

The work of the scientists at the meeting in Lund will be presented in a 200-page book with the title "The Planet in 2050, The Lund Discourse on the Future", as well as in articles in a number of journals, including the new journal *Solutions* to be launched in 2009.

Each group outlined pathways from today to a more desirable 2050. The group focusing on energy concluded that an investment comparable to 3-15% of global GDP would be enough to fund renewable energy to achieve a carbon-neutral supply by 2050. It would require the equivalent of a major clean power plant every day, or 1GW per day. Today the world adds capacity at an even higher rate, but with mostly fossil fueled plants.

The current economic crisis may present just the right moment to make the shift. In that way

the crisis could be a catalyst for a more desirable future for Planet Earth.

For more information and interviews:

Dr. Guy Brasseur +1 303 718 3697

Dr. Thomas B Johansson +46 (0) 73 225 700

Dr. Jill Jäger: +43 676 301 50 95

Dr. Steve Running: +1 406 243 6311

Dr. Johan Rockström +46 (0)8 674 7200

Dr. Mary Scholes +27 82 889 86 70

Dr. Robert Costanza +1 802 922 6065

Torvald Jacobsson +46 (0) 70 52 36 547

[www.theplanet2050.org](http://www.theplanet2050.org)