

On track towards a sustainable future?

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Abstract

Five years ago, the United Nations agreed on two major decisions: The 17 global goals for sustainable development were approved by all 193 member countries. On Goal 13 – the Climate – in Paris, every single government agreed on the most ambitious plan of action to date.

Obviously, urgent climate action the number one necessary condition if our children and grandchildren are to live in a sustainable future.

However, we are not at all on track.

Both the United States and Brazil have stepped back, and all too many countries have not moved/are not moving sufficiently forward.

But awareness about the existential threats to future generations has increased tremendously in these same past five years. Mayors from the world's major cities and many large companies are in the forefront – as is an ever more active civil society with strong and powerful participation from the young generation.

Climate action is about terminating all use of fossil fuels on this planet well before 2050 – notwithstanding how much we have found or may find. This takes incredible political determination and public understanding all around the globe: We get most of our energy from fossil fuels today - and in order to supply all villages in India and Africa with the energy they need must be produced by a much cheaper and much more efficient use of renewables.

All this will take massive further development in technology and economies of a scale we cannot even image today. And it will only happen if governments change the regulatory framework of the markets by heavily taxing CO² emissions while supporting and encouraging sustainable companies – including cooperation in research and development between national and local governments, private companies, pension funds and other financial institutions.