The WBCSD’s Regional Network

Rio+20 and beyond: Business solutions for a sustainable world
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The UN Conference on Sustainable Development in June 2012, referred to as Rio+20, is a major milestone for the WBCSD and its Regional Network. The WBCSD was founded to provide business input to the Earth Summit in 1992, closely followed by the creation of the first Business Council for Sustainable Development (BCSD) in Argentina.

Over the past two decades, the role of business in sustainable development has dramatically changed – from being perceived as part of the problem to becoming a key provider of solutions for a more sustainable world.

This brochure describes the journey of the WBCSD and its Regional Network from raising awareness and developing the business case for sustainable development during the early days, to promoting action on the ground and engaging in advocacy activities. In each section, we describe the global context and provide snapshots of activities undertaken by both the WBCSD and the Regional Network across the world.
Importantly, we also lay out our joint efforts in accelerating change toward a sustainable future, for which the WBCSD’s Vision 2050 provides a useful roadmap, which is being tailored to local circumstances by Regional Network partners.

In view of the urgency and the limited progress of the international community in addressing sustainability challenges, business leadership is more urgent than ever. Business is the most powerful change agent and there are huge opportunities for companies willing to embrace sustainable development. But business cannot do it alone. We need governments and civil society to help create the right framework conditions to scale up the business solutions toward the goals outlined in Vision 2050.

In a changing global context characterized by the ascent of emerging economies and the search for bottom-up solutions to address sustainability issues, the Regional Network is an invaluable asset for the WBCSD. We very much look forward to further strengthening our cooperation in order to meet our vision of over nine billion people living well and within the limits of the planet by mid century.

Peter Bakker, President,  
World Business Council for Sustainable Development
The Regional Network

1992
First BCSD in Argentina

2002
Regional Network embraces 33 partner organizations

2012
Regional Network grows to 62 partner organizations
What is the Regional Network?

The WBCSD’s Regional Network is an alliance of more than 60 CEO-led business organizations united by a shared commitment to providing business leadership for sustainable development in their respective countries or regions.

While the WBCSD makes the business case for sustainable development at the global level, the members of the Regional Network, through their local and regional initiatives and activities, help to promote sustainable development at the local and regional levels. Together, the WBCSD and its Regional Network create the global-to-local-to-global linkages necessary to promote business solutions for a sustainable world.

Regional Network members, many of them created as Business Councils for Sustainable Development (BCSDs), are composed of leading local companies and subsidiaries of foreign corporations, including numerous members of the WBCSD. The first BCSDs were established in 1992. Since then, the network has expanded to encompass more than 60 BCSDs and partner organizations worldwide.

The value of the Regional Network

The Regional Network has an integral role to play in creating awareness, promoting action, and advocating for appropriate framework conditions to scale business solutions for sustainable development.

The Regional Network brings value on three levels.

1. Enhancing the WBCSD’s global outreach
   It strengthens the WBCSD’s legitimacy as a truly global organization representing varied perspectives. By disseminating messages to a wide range of players, the Regional Network supports global advocacy efforts and helps to position the WBCSD as a preferred partner for governments and international organizations. Importantly, the Network adds breadth to the WBCSD’s work program by providing local and regional perspectives, validating results, disseminating information and implementing pilot projects.

2. Fostering synergies with WBCSD member companies
   The Regional Network adds value to WBCSD member companies, themselves mostly multinationals with global operations. Through their advocacy activities, our partner organizations contribute to securing the business license to operate, innovate and grow in their respective countries and regions. They provide an additional channel for implementing local sustainability initiatives and for reaching out to business leaders and opinion formers. They also play an important role in addressing supply chain issues and connecting WBCSD members with small and medium enterprises. As a consequence, a growing number of WBCSD members are now part of both the global and regional organizations.

3. Strengthening Regional Network partners’ activities
   As many Regional Network partners share similar socio-economic and cultural characteristics, hence similar sustainability challenges, they benefit from cooperating with each other. This mutual exchange enables them to gain firsthand experiences from their peers, discuss challenges and find solutions.

   In addition, through the WBCSD, Regional Network partners can connect with the most important international corporations and benefit from leading-edge thinking and best practices on economic, environmental and social management. They also gain access to key global players and platforms concerned with business and sustainable development. Lastly, the Regional Network enables partners to enrich their own work activities by taking advantage of the WBCSD’s learning-by-sharing opportunities, tools and capacity building material.

“In a world in which success increasingly depends on strong partnerships across borders, the Regional Network plays a key role in providing practical tools and understanding of the local circumstances to effectively address sustainability challenges.”

Jin-taek Whang, Secretary General, Korea BCSD

“The Central American members of the Regional Network cooperate very closely to promote sustainable development in the region – both to minimize environmental impacts and enhance the quality of life of people.”

J. Roberto Leiva, Executive Director, BCSD Honduras (CEHDES)
“The Regional Network is one of the WBCSD’s most precious assets. It gives us legitimacy as a truly global organization and creates a bridge between global and local sustainability agendas. Our partner organizations around the world help spread our messages and tools, add valuable perspectives to our work, and provide a conduit to implement local initiatives.”

Marcel Engel, Managing Director, WBCSD Regional Network
Asia
- BCSD Kazakhstan
- Malaysia Business Council for Sustainability and Responsibility (BCSR)
- BCSD Mongolia
- BCSD Pakistan
- BCSD Sri Lanka
- BCSD Taiwan
- BCSD Thailand
- BCSD United Arab Emirates
- Business Environment Council (BEC) – Hong Kong
- China BCSD
- Confederation of Indian Industry (CII)
- Indonesia BCSD
- Korea BCSD
- Maala-Business for Social Responsibility – Israel
- Nippon Keidanren (Japan Business Federation)
- Philippine Business for the Environment (PBE)
- TERI – BCSD India
- Vietnam BCSD

Oceania
- New Zealand Sustainable Business Council (SBC)
- Business Council of Australia (BCA)

www.wbcsd.org/regional-network.aspx
The first Rio decade:
From Rio to Johannesburg

1992
Rio Earth Summit

2002
Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development
The global context
From the environment to sustainable development

The international debate on sustainable development started in 1972, when the United Nations (UN) Conference on the Human Environment took place in Stockholm, focusing on global environmental challenges.

Later, in 1987, the term sustainable development was coined when the UN World Commission on Environment and Development made it the central idea of its report, Our Common Future. Defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the needs of future generations,” the concept has evolved over the years but this definition still remains valid today.

In the final pages of Our Common Future, the Commission called for an international conference and the Earth Summit was eventually held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. For the first time, both environment and development were on the agenda, and sustainable development was elaborated into a set of principles (Rio Principles) and a program of action (Agenda 21) for countries to follow.

The Earth Summit launched multilateral global conventions on biodiversity and climate change. Further, it urged countries to allocate 0.7% of their Gross Domestic Product for official development assistance (ODA), a target that has still not been reached today while foreign direct investment to emerging economies has increased exponentially.

In 1997, the Rio+5 conference held in New York concluded that little progress had been made since the Earth Summit. The UN Commission on Sustainable Development was subsequently established to ensure follow-up and prompt, measurable progress.

The role of business
From awareness to action

Before the Earth Summit in Rio, business was in general defensive about environmental issues, largely because it was perceived as being one of the main causes of the problem.

In 1990, the Business Council for Sustainable Development, later to become the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD), was established to change this perception and explore how business could use its skills and resources to become part of the solution. The book Changing Course was published as an input to the Earth Summit, laying out a roadmap for society and business going forward. A key element was the concept of Eco-Efficiency, a term coined by the WBCSD to demonstrate the positive correlation between economic and ecological efficiency, in simple terms “creating more value with less resources.”

This concept epitomized the emergence of the business case, meaning that sustainable development did not just make sense, but made good business sense.
Global blueprints for business action

The first Rio decade saw the emergence of several standards and global blueprints – underlining the necessary involvement of business to create a more sustainable world.

This was partly instigated by business itself following a number of earlier environmental accidents, involving resource-intensive and polluting industries, such as Seveso in Italy, Bhopal in India, Exxon Valdez in Alaska or Chernobyl in the Soviet Union, which had substantially deteriorated public trust in business.

Companies knew their license to operate was under threat and that they needed to “put their house in order.” A number of voluntary initiatives were consequently launched, such as Responsible Care® for the chemical sector, aiming to improve its transparency and boost the industry’s health, safety, and environmental standards.

Several other sector initiatives looking at the sustainability performance and challenges across an industry’s entire value chain came to life, including six sector projects launched under the umbrella of the WBCSD.

Members of the WBCSD were also instrumental in promoting the creation of an unified environmental management system standard, which eventually led to the development of ISO 14001.

Across sectors, the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) was the first attempt to set common standards for corporate responsibility reporting. Launched in 1997, the GRI guidelines have since become the most commonly used framework for sustainability reporting by companies.

In 1999, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan called on business leaders to embrace 10 principles in the areas of human rights, labor, the environment and anti-corruption. Known as the Global Compact, these principles were meant to help achieve “globalization with a human face.”

A year later, the Millennium Development Goals set time-bound and measurable objectives for combating poverty, hunger, disease, illiteracy, environmental degradation and discrimination against women, to be achieved by 2015.

Sustainable development agendas for business

Throughout the first Rio decade, business needed to address two sustainable development agendas. The first agenda was a public policy agenda driven by forces outside of business. Key issues on this agenda included the consequences of globalization, energy and climate change, the demands for increased transparency, reporting and stricter codes of conduct following the Enron collapse and other corporate scandals.

The second agenda focused on the business case for sustainable development, meant to create awareness and demonstrate that sustainable development was good business. Financial sustainability indexes such as the Domini 400 Social Index, the Dow Jones Sustainability Index, or the FTSE4Good gave weight to this concept by showing that sustainability leaders often outperformed their peers.

From 1992 to 2002, the balance between the key actors had shifted. We had moved from a bipolar world made up of governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to a tripartite world of governments, business and civil society working in partnership to find solutions to sustainable development issues. As the Rio+10 Summit in Johannesburg was approaching, there was a growing feeling that a sustainable society was a shared responsibility and that business was a key part of the solution.
Regional Network

The WBCSD’s Regional Network, which included two BCSDs in Argentina and Colombia and two partner organizations in the Philippines and South Africa in 1992, had grown to encompass 36 BCSDs and partner organizations in 2002. The expansion of the Network exemplified that sustainable development could not happen without the involvement of developing and emerging countries. It also demonstrated that sustainability depended on collaboration between countries with different interests and economic realities.

In many ways, the Network’s activities mirrored the WBCSD’s own programs but provided a key platform to test and implement policies and concepts tailored to particular local circumstances. In short, the Network ensured the WBCSD would be a truly global voice representing wide perspectives. Given the breadth of the work undertaken throughout the world, we can only present here a selection of activities.

Eco-Efficiency and cleaner production

Eco-Efficiency, or its sister approach, cleaner production, was a cornerstone of the work program of virtually every member of the Network in the first Rio decade. BCSDs in Argentina and Colombia undertook groundbreaking work, showing through case studies how Eco-Efficiency was helping companies to reduce their environmental impacts while saving money and improving competitiveness. They were joined by other BCSDs in the region, including Honduras, El Salvador, Mexico, Paraguay and the United States. As Eco-Efficiency was also relevant to small and medium enterprises, the BCSD in Brazil helped establish a virtual center to disseminate information and know-how to smaller companies.

The concept of Eco-Efficiency spread rapidly to other parts of the Network. In Asia, early promoters included the Philippine Business for the Environment and the BCSDs in Malaysia, Thailand and Taiwan. The Maghreb, AEEC in Egypt and APEQUE in Algeria took the lead in promoting the concept. And in Europe, the Czech BCSD pioneered a change in the mindset of local businesses, followed by BCSDs in Austria, Croatia and Portugal as well as FE-BCSD Spain and EpE in France.

The benefits of Eco-Efficiency were also promoted by the New Zealand BCSD and WASIG, a WBCSD partner organization in Australia. The latter launched a cleaner production center as did the WBCSD’s partner organization in Zimbabwe. A similar center was established by BCSD Honduras, which designed integrated preventive strategies for processes, products and services aimed at increasing efficiency and competitiveness, while reducing social and environmental risks.

By-Product Synergy (BPS) – using the by-products and wastes of one industry as raw materials and resources for another – was a value-creating concept that drew from Eco-Efficiency. Started in the United States, the BPS process was later adopted by the BCSD in the United Kingdom and other Regional Network members such as the United Arab Emirates and Malaysia BCSDs.

Waste management was also a priority for BCSD Colombia that drew a digital map of industrial waste in the country while PBE in the Philippines ran a successful industrial waste exchange program.

“Eco-Efficiency was widely embraced by our members as it addressed familiar business issues such as competitiveness, efficiency and productivity. It was a powerful tool to make the business case for sustainable development by demonstrating the positive returns of cost savings – for companies and the environment.”

Sebastian Bigorito
Executive Director, BCSD Argentina
Energy and climate

In 1997, the Kyoto Protocol confirmed climate change on the global sustainability agenda. It set timetables and targets for a number of industrialized and transition countries; it also established a mechanism to promote technology transfer and emission reductions in developing countries. Energy and climate issues thus became a key focus area for the WBCSD and many of its Regional Network partners, during both the first and second Rio decades.

The Latin American BCSDs started mobilizing the business sector and engaging in the policy process. The BCSD Mexico published a position of the Latin American private sector on the Kyoto Protocol. In Honduras, the BCSD teamed up with the Central American Bank for Economic Integration to launch a fund to finance energy efficiency projects. And in Asia, the Confederation of Indian Industry issued a report assessing the science, economics and politics of climate change, and making recommendations for the Indian government and industry.

The Regional Network has also cooperated with the WBCSD in providing business input to the annual Conferences of the Parties (COPs) of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC). Among others, the BCSDs in Argentina and Brazil are regularly part of their country delegations. Together with the WBCSD, Regional Network partners have also co-hosted Business Days during UNFCCC COPs. Recent examples include BCSD Mexico in Cancun and NBI South Africa in Durban.

Regional Network partners were also involved in promoting and deploying tools to measure and manage emissions. The Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol, developed by the World Resources Institute and the WBCSD, has had an important impact since its launch in 2001. BCSD Mexico worked with the Ministry for the Environment and sector associations to develop a voluntary, multi-sectoral GHG accounting and reporting program, which became a national standard. Its success encouraged replication in other parts of the Network, including in the Philippines, where the program included GHG inventories, and in France where it was used to quantify GHG emissions from transport and waste management activities. The China BCSD’s Energy Conservation and GHG Management Program established pilot projects targeting the cement and oil and gas sectors. For its part, BCSD Zimbabwe, with the support of the country’s electricity supply authority, helped companies carry out energy audits and save energy.

In Germany, econsense launched a Climate Policy Map, an interactive tool to access information on climate policy, energy supply and socio-economic factors for 27 countries and regions. In Taiwan, the BCSD has been working on developing a GHG Double-PR Program (Public-Private Register and Reduction), the island’s first pilot cap-and-trade program.

Acknowledging the importance of energy consumption in buildings, regional partners in Austria, China, Portugal, Spain and the United Kingdom signed the WBCSD’s energy efficiency in buildings manifesto and launched projects at national levels. In India, TERI BCSD’s green building rating system was adopted by the government as a national standard. More recently, BCSDs in Thailand and the United Arab Emirates as well as BEC in Hong Kong started initiatives on green buildings. Along similar lines, FFA in Spain is working on models and indicators for sustainable cities.

“By taking so-called “wastes” from one company and using them as raw materials for another, industry can turn a negative into a positive – for the environment and shareholders. It is a sort of viable 21st century alchemy, and it’s critical for our future to establish this kind of circular economy.”

Andrew Mangan, Executive Director, US BCSD
The focus of the Regional Network was not confined to environmental issues. As the WBCSD started tackling social issues at the end of the first Rio decade, the Regional Network also launched programs on Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and related concepts.

NHO in Norway published a guide to CSR clarifying what the concept meant, why it was important for business and how it could be operationalized. CSR best practices also came from DERES in Uruguay that has since made CSR its core topic, releasing case studies, reports and more.

A CSR network was established in Croatia offering seminars, an online portal and case studies to sensitize the business community to social issues. In an effort to foster and implement CSR in the supply chain, AccionRSE in Chile developed courses for SMEs working as suppliers to global corporations.

Peru 2021 worked with local businesses on a vision for the country in which companies could lead change by incorporating CSR as a strategic management tool. In Germany, recognizing the growing interest of financial markets in sustainable development and CSR topics, econsense released a paper to start discussions with ratings agencies on further development of integrated corporate valuation.

Over the first decade, the Regional Network also charted a new course with stakeholder dialogues. In 1999, the WBCSD capitalized on the Regional Network to gauge perspectives, both from business and non-business representatives, in Taiwan, Thailand, the Philippines, Brazil and Argentina on CSR and sustainability through the market. These stakeholder dialogues started a tradition of stakeholder engagement within the Council.

“Energy-consuming and highly polluting industries are the key targets of the China BCSD’s program on energy conservation and emissions reduction. They need to take leadership in addressing sustainable development.”

Zhai Qi, Executive Secretary General, China BCSD
The second Rio decade: From Johannesburg to Rio+20

2002
Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development

2012
Rio+20 Conference
The global context

In 2002, the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg marked the start of the second Rio decade. The Summit’s main outcome was the Johannesburg Plan of Implementation, which set out a timetable to address specific social and environmental challenges. The Summit also reaffirmed earlier agreements such as Agenda 21, the Doha Trade Declaration, the Monterey Consensus on funding for development, the Millennium Development Goals and various Multilateral Environmental Agreements. Beyond these outcomes, the WSSD left important legacies. It highlighted the importance of partnerships between governments, business and civil society. It also acknowledged the shortcomings of the international multilateral system and global institutions in managing significant challenges and defining common positions on sensitive issues such as climate change.

Social unrest brings new issues to the fore

The second Rio decade brought poverty alleviation, including access to healthcare, water and energy to the core of the sustainable development debate. In early 2000, the strong economic growth during the 90s had led to a substantial wealth increase from which many parts of the global society had been excluded. Diverse groups found in the globalization and free market debate something they could unite against: big intergovernmental institutions and multinational companies.

Growing divides and tensions were also felt on the political front where the focus turned to national security and the war on terror following September 11 2001. Governments continued falling behind their commitments on ODA and on the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals. Further, the breakdown of the WTO negotiations was putting the Doha Round of trade negotiations in jeopardy.

This decade also saw a growing demand for more control of corporations, underpinned by the flow of accounting and embezzlement scandals that were hitting the corporate world. The Sarbanes-Oxley Act in the US and growing consumer mistrust in many countries were a direct consequence of these misbehaviors.

Global governance put in question

Over the decade, we witnessed a gradual power shift from West to East and from the old G8 to the newer, bolder G20, reflecting the growing importance of the leading emerging economies. All of this was happening against the backdrop of a financial crisis and economic recession in the West that swept away centennial multinationals.

The second Rio decade ended in disappointment with the weak outcome of the 2009 climate conference in Copenhagen. Many were shocked by the failure of intergovernmental organizations to address an obvious and serious risk for society. But, it was also a chance to look at new ways to deal with sustainability challenges. For example, bottom-up actions to reduce carbon emissions, broken down by industry sectors, emerged as an alternative approach for tackling climate issues.

Despite the lack of global consensus among nations, the world has started transitioning toward sustainability. Governments have, to a varied degree, realized this transition and the need for resource-efficient and low-carbon solutions to meet the needs and aspirations of a growing population. A race among countries and companies to become the leading suppliers of greener and more inclusive solutions has started. For business, this represents a challenge, but also a huge opportunity in the form of a long-term demand for products and services.

Timeline

Growth of the Regional Network

2002

Monterrey Consensus on Financing for Development

Johannesburg World Summit on Sustainable Development

2003

CentraRSE Guatemala Asociación de Empresarios para el Desarrollo (Costa Rica)

BCSD Bolivia

BCSD Paraguay

BCSD Sri Lanka

Confederation of Indian Industry

BCSD Kazakhstan

Nippon Keidanren (Japan)

Business Environment Council (Hong Kong)

2004

Acción RSE (Chile)

SumaRSE (Panama)

econsense (Germany)

BCSD Turkey

China BCSD

2005

Millennium Ecosystem Assessment

BCSD Hungary

2006

DERES (Uruguay)

Danish BCSD

BCSD Pakistan

uniRSE (Nicaragua)
The role of business

During the first Rio decade, the focus had been on awareness creation and understanding the implications of sustainable development. Following the Johannesburg Summit, the focus shifted to actions and measurable outcomes. And business – as an engine of growth, employment and innovation – was increasingly recognized as the key provider of solutions for a sustainable future.

A strong business presence

There were more CEOs than heads of governments at the WSSD in Johannesburg. A “business day”, jointly organized by the International Chamber of Commerce and the WBCSD under the banner of the Business Action for Sustainable Development, attracted 900 people. Yet, while business got recognition for its constructive role, there was also a strong push for more corporate accountability, a key campaigning theme by NGOs in Johannesburg.

For the WBCSD, the Summit was a success. Its string of events, reports and a new book illustrating how companies had been Walking the Talk over the past decade provided substantive input. Further, the Council’s interaction with other stakeholders positioned the WBCSD as a proactive organization.

Companies engage in societal challenges

Responding to the growing focus on social issues, the WBCSD launched its second Corporate Social Responsibility report and established a project on Sustainable Livelihoods in 2001. The latter focused on exploring the role companies and markets could play in improving the lives of low-income communities in ways that benefit the poor and business.

As the capacity of governments and intergovernmental organizations to deal with global social issues had decreased, it was felt markets could support poverty alleviation. The role of business and markets in addressing societal and sustainability challenges became a core theme of the WBCSD’s work program. Reports on Sustainability Through the Market and the Role of Business in Tomorrow’s Society are a testimony to this.

In 2006, the Development Focus Area went a step further in promoting business solutions to development challenges. It coined the concept of Inclusive Business and released a series of tools to help companies measure the impact of their activities in developing countries and take informed investment decisions. More recently, the group launched a project to scale the business contribution to providing universal access to clean, reliable and affordable energy, as a major contribution to the UN’s Sustainable Energy for All campaign.

In 2005, following the publication of the Millennium Ecosystems Assessment, which increased awareness on the rapid degradation of our ecosystems, the WBCSD established a Focus Area on this topic. The group developed tools to help companies gauge risks and opportunities and, importantly, value ecosystems services. The WBCSD also cooperated, and still does, with governments and NGOs in providing business input to the meetings of the Convention of Biological Diversity and IUCN’s World Conservation Congress.

A systems approach is needed

Overall, during the second Rio Decade, it became more evident that sustainability challenges are broad, interconnected and complex. To address these challenges, strong public-private partnerships will be required to develop innovative systems solutions during the next Rio decade and beyond. Hope came from a project the WBCSD started in 2008 and materialized into a vision. Vision 2050, launched in 2010, lays out a pathway to a world in which nine billion people live well, and within the planet’s resources, by mid-century. This vision will be at the core of the business contribution during the third Rio decade.
Regional Network

By the end of the second Rio decade, the Regional Network included around 50 national/regional BCSDs and partner organizations.

In a changing global context, with political and economic power shifting from industrialized countries to emerging economies, the Regional Network became a key channel to engage with new global players, such as the “BRICS” countries. As a result, BCSDs were established in China and in India and regular advocacy activities started, such as the CEO Forum organized every year since 2003 as the official curtain raiser of the prestigious Delhi Sustainable Development Summit in cooperation with TERI BCSD India.

The importance of the Regional Network was further accentuated by the move away from top-down global agreements toward bottom-up local solutions to address sustainability challenges. The Network thus provided a bridge between developing and developed countries, at a time when disagreements between these groups were jeopardizing international processes and platforms tackling sustainability issues.

Noticeable also during this decade was the growing involvement of the business community in the Middle East, exemplified by the launch in 2009 of a BCSD in the United Arab Emirates.

Sustainable livelihoods, inclusive business and poverty alleviation

With two thirds of partner organizations based in emerging economies and developing countries, the Regional Network offered a natural platform to advance the development agenda. In early 2000, dialogues on the role of business in promoting Sustainable Livelihoods were held in Argentina, Brazil, China, Costa Rica, India and South Africa. In 2006, the WBSCD and SNV Netherlands Development Organization pioneered an innovative alliance in Latin America to promote commercially-viable solutions to alleviate poverty, later coined as inclusive business opportunities. BCSDs and partner organizations in Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Panama, and Peru came together to host a series of CEO-led forums, generating over 80 inclusive business ideas, of which some 40 were implemented.

Inclusive business opportunities were also promoted in other parts of the Regional Network. In Africa, workshops were held with NBI in South Africa, BCSD Zimbabwe and FEMA-BCSD Mozambique. Similarly, in Asia, the WBSCD began to collaborate with the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Regional Network partner organizations in India, Indonesia and Vietnam.

Ecosystems

The Regional Network has long been an active contributor to the conservation and sustainable use of ecosystems and their services. In Thailand, the BCSD benchmarked environmental management projects focusing on raw materials, water and energy conservation. In the United States, the BCSD was a key partner to the WBSCD and IUCN in a role-playing exercise demonstrating the benefits of making deals that are economically-sound because they conserve ecosystems and properly value their services. In France, EpE engaged in a project to develop tools and indicators to help companies reduce their impact on biodiversity and improve the management of ecosystems. Nippon Keidenran in Japan cooperated with the WBSCD in providing business input to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Conference of

“Sustainability issues are becoming important for Turkish business as companies realize it can give them a competitive edge on the international scene. They need to meet best-in-class standards on sustainable development in order to gain access to global markets and international capital. For instance, the Istanbul Stock Exchange Sustainability Index provides an important platform to recognize and profile the sustainability leaders among Turkish companies.”

Engin Guvenç,
Executive Director, BCSD Turkey
“Economic activity not only has an impact on ecosystems, but also depends on the environmental services provided by them. Therefore good risk management practices require an appropriate consideration of the consequences of ecosystem degradation.”

Cristina García-Orcoyen, Chief Executive, Fundación Entorno-BCSD Spain

“We strongly believe Inclusive Business projects can help combat poverty. Such projects need to take all three sustainability dimensions into consideration: economic growth, social progress and ecological balance. Their implementation further requires building trustful partnerships with other stakeholders.”

Santiago Madriñán, Executive Director, BCSD Colombia

the Parties (COP), as did BCSD Brazil and econsense in Germany. Likewise, FE-BCSD Spain worked with the WBCSD to promote the private sector’s participation in the World Conservation Congress in 2010 while BCSD Korea is doing this in 2012.

Closely related to the topic of ecosystems, various Regional Network partners are tackling sustainable water management, a pressing sustainability challenge. In Oceania, the New Zealand BCSD engaged in a project to enhance the use of commercial water while in the United States, the BCSD and its members are addressing watershed issues in the Louisiana Water Synergy project. Further, CGLI is working on water policies, with the aim to incorporate sustainable development principles into the revised Great Lakes Water Quality Agreement between the United States and Canada. Also in Canada, the Excel Partnership is working on water issues, looking at the range of stakeholders, from suppliers to end users, involved in water management. Finally, in France, EpE and Deloitte launched a study on companies’ best practices in sustainable water management covering various sectors.

Education, training and capacity building

The second Rio decade saw the emergence of many initiatives to foster education and training on sustainable development. As early movers, the BCSDs in Latin America set up a network of institutions committed to education and training on Eco-Efficiency and sustainable development in the region. Educational institutions in Argentina, Costa Rica, Mexico and the United States were involved in this unique effort. In New Zealand, the BCSD launched a fully-fledged educational program, including online resources for use in schools.

Over the years, several Regional Network partners have become capacity-building experts and one key audience has been the young generation. Replicating the WBCSD’s program, BCSD Portugal and FE-BCSD Spain launched their own Future Leaders Teams, designed to train young executives on sustainability topics. Similar initiatives were set up in Malaysia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Portugal, Taiwan, Turkey, the United Kingdom and the United States. In Costa Rica, AED worked on innovative ways to improve the quality of the educational system.

In Kazakhstan and Vietnam, training workshops were held to educate companies on key business and sustainable development issues, and understand how these could impact their competitiveness.

BCSD Argentina collected more than 300 best practice examples, ranging from Eco-Efficiency to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and inclusive business, illustrating how companies have drawn value from putting sustainability in practice. The BCA in Australia published two landmark reports on its members’ CSR initiatives and ran a forum to demonstrate how Australian companies are pursuing resource efficiency initiatives. In Sri Lanka, the BCSD included CSR into the curriculum of university students majoring in economic development.

Accountability, transparency and reporting

As the scandals in the business community led to a push for more transparency, Regional Network partners responded with various initiatives to broaden and improve corporate accountability and reporting practices.

Partners in Guatemala, Nicaragua and Panama cooperated on the development of social responsibility indicators for Central America called IndicaRSE. The indicators were meant to support companies’ competitiveness and Central America’s move toward sustainable development. In turn, the New Zealand BCSD pioneered a framework for sustainability indicators, providing guidance on measurement and
establishing a common reporting format for business.

In Colombia, the BCSD worked on Eco-Efficiency reporting, publishing several case studies on the achievements of local companies in the field. As a permanent advisor to ISO, BCSD Argentina provided input to both local and global standardization processes.

In Mongolia, the BCSD cooperated with the Mongolian National Chamber of Commerce and Industry to develop green labels. A similar eco-labeling project was implemented by the Thailand BCSD.

Reaching out to SMEs

The Regional Network has been a key channel for reaching out to small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) that underpin national economies.

Philippine PBE, in cooperation with Philippine Business for Social Progress, set up a mentoring program for SMEs. Meanwhile, Regional Network partners in Argentina and Malaysia were helping SMEs to upgrade their environmental and social performance through the supply chains of their members and prepare for environmental management systems certification. Along similar lines, the Danish BCSD is working on measures to incorporate sustainability principles in supply chain management and is currently developing a framework and criteria to define sustainable products.

In Bolivia, in order to strengthen the capacity of SMEs to win contracts during trade fairs, the BCSD organizes a “reverse trade fair,” a role model where exhibitors play the part of customers and visitors the part of suppliers. This setting gives buyers and suppliers an opportunity to learn from each other in order to meet their respective expectations.

The Curaçao BCSD, the first partner organization in the Caribbean to join the Regional Network, has started promoting the use of environmental management systems in the country’s commercial and service industries, mostly SMEs.

FE-BCSD Spain adapted a six-step approach to introduce ISO 14 000 to SMEs. A similar approach had been launched by BEC in Hong Kong. Likewise, Peru 2021’s CADENA project, supported by the Inter-American Development Bank and Peru’s Environmental Council, assisted member companies in implementing environmental management systems among their small and medium-sized suppliers.

One of BCSD Denmark’s priorities has been developing guidelines for sustainable supply chain management, procurement, products and buildings.

In an effort to engage with financial markets, a key actor in the pursuit of sustainable development, the BCSD Turkey launched a sustainability index with the Istanbul Stock Exchange. In Israel, Maala has been releasing a sustainability index since 2003 which ranks companies based on CSR criteria. The Tel Aviv Stock Exchange is among the partners involved in this effort.

“The creation of the United Arab Emirates BCSD is firmly embedded in Sharjah’s vision of a sustainable future. The BCSD will also contribute to enhancing the competitiveness of local industry by adopting global best practice in managing sustainability issues.”

Hussain Al Mahmoudi, Chairman, United Arab Emirates BCSD
The third Rio decade:
From Rio+20 onward
The global context

The third Rio Decade started in the midst of a global turmoil. The US and EU are facing stagnating growth, rising unemployment and high levels of public debt while Japan is trying to recover from the Fukushima disaster. Economic and political power continues to shift east and south and emerging economies, especially in Asia and Latin America, are carrying on their ascent. Africa is also beginning to catch up, with some of its countries displaying the highest growth rates worldwide.

Sustainable development requires long-term value creation

The global financial crisis has led to a questioning of the current economic system, in particular of financial markets, but also business ethics broadly. Companies and the financial sector are under pressure to reform their practices and change their short-term orientation. Serving all major stakeholders, not just shareholders, is becoming essential to maximize corporate value, regain trust and for the market economy to succeed.

Failure to reach a common position on climate change

Hoped to be a milestone on the road to a new global climate agreement, the 17th Conference of the Parties (COP17) to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change in Durban, South Africa, did not fulfill expectations. Yet, governments recognized the need for long-term action on climate change, including the leading emerging economies. There also was an emphasis on national bottom-up solutions for emission reductions, meaning that countries should develop nationally appropriate mitigation actions (NAMAs).

Continuing degradation of ecosystems leads to resource competition

In 2010, a set of reports known as The Economics of Ecosystems and Biodiversity estimated that biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation was between Euro 1.35 trillion and Euro 3.10 trillion each year. Further, in 2011, at the COP 10 of the Convention on Biological Diversity in Nagoya, Japan, countries agreed to support new targets to reduce biodiversity loss by 2020. This places heavier demands on major users, including business, to manage ecosystems and biodiversity in a sustainable way. It also means companies may face competition for resources in the future.

A world in turmoil

In the US and Europe, tensions around jobs, education, pensions and healthcare are being exacerbated by austerity measures taken by governments to tackle the debt crisis. Across North Africa and the Middle East, the Arab spring reflects the desire for freedom and better living standards of millions of people.

The UN has warned that the world may suffer from another recession, projecting that global economic growth will slow down further in 2012 and even leading emerging economies like India and China, which led the recovery last time, will get bogged down.

Setting enabling framework conditions for business

In the third Rio decade, sustainability issues have become broader, more complex and interdependent, meaning that solutions will require new forms of cooperation between business, governments and civil society. As an engine of growth and innovation, companies are in a unique position to deliver solutions for a sustainable world. However, business will not be able to do this at the speed needed unless governments set enabling framework conditions that incentivize action.
The business role

Going forward, we are facing a resource- and carbon-constrained world. For global business, this means that to remain competitive, companies will need to develop solutions, that are resource-efficient and low-polluting.

A Green Race has started amongst the main economies and companies to become the leading suppliers of energy- and resource-efficient products and services that will be in demand in the future. Multiple green growth initiatives have been launched, driven by the EU, OECD, China, South Korea and others.

Holistic and smart solutions to solve global challenges

A broader debate on the role of business in society, and how companies can encourage sustainable consumption and lifestyles is taking place. In emerging economies, the challenge is to continue raising living standards while decoupling growth from environmental impact. This requires a holistic value chain review. It also calls on companies to educate consumers about and help them adapt to more sustainable lifestyles.

This is particularly important given that in just 40 years, the world’s population will increase by a third to over 9 billion people. Each of these individuals will want access to education, healthcare, energy, communication and consumer goods. And each will require food, clean water, shelter, and transportation. Further, the number of people who live in cities will double to 70% of the global population by 2050.

The world will have to go through a huge transformation up to 2050 – and the question is whether the global society is prepared to take the steps necessary to meet the demand of 9 billion people living well, within the planet’s resources by mid-century.

Vision 2050

The WBCSD raised the question in its Vision 2050 report, which identifies the gaps, charts the pathway, and describes the significant potential for new business opportunities.

Launched in 2010, the report outlines a pathway to a sustainable world based on nine key elements. It suggests a number of “must haves” that need to be in place by 2020 if we are going to be on track to a sustainable world by 2050.

Vision 2050 provides a useful platform for engaging the rest of the global community in a common effort in the third Rio decade and forms a key input to the upcoming UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD) taking place in June 2012.

The WBCSD presence in Rio

Twenty years after the Earth Summit, the UNCSD known as Rio+20, will mark a major milestone for the WBCSD. The event provides a unique opportunity to highlight the efforts of its members and Regional Network partners in leading business toward sustainable development.

While many long-term challenges remain, the role of business in providing solutions to sustainable development has changed dramatically over the past 20 years, and Rio+20 provides a platform to recognize this progress as we look to accelerate and scale up efforts. With that in mind, the WBCSD produced Changing Pace, a discussion paper for dialogue with governments on the right framework conditions to accelerate and scale up the business contribution toward the goals outlined in Vision 2050.
Regional Network

The Regional Network has been heavily involved in developing, deploying and adapting Vision 2050 to their respective local context. Regional Network partners are also key in engaging with local governments and stakeholders to create the appropriate conditions to accelerate the pace toward the achievement of Vision 2050’s goals.

Close to 30 regional dialogues and workshops, most of them organized with Regional Network partners, provided input into the preparation of Vision 2050. Partners from Argentina, Brazil, China, Colombia, Hong-Kong, India, Japan, Malaysia, Mozambique, Pakistan, Russia, South Africa, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, the United Kingdom and Zimbabwe contributed to ensuring perspectives from around the globe were reflected in Vision 2050.

The global launch of Vision 2050 was organized in cooperation with TERI BCSD India at the Delhi Sustainable Development Summit in February 2010. This was followed by many other local launches and workshops. The report has been translated into 13 languages, and various partners are using the vision with the aim of designing pathways to a sustainable future in their own countries and regions. These include Brazil, Indonesia, New Zealand, Poland, South Africa, Taiwan and the United Arab Emirates.

The following examples show how the Regional Network has been engaged in this effort.

Snapshots

NBI is using Vision 2050 to develop a strategy for South Africa’s sustainable future, identifying priorities and social transformations needed, and the role of business in this transition. In particular, NBI has drawn from the report to provide inputs into the National Planning Commission established by President Zuma to look at where South Africa should be in 2030 and the challenges the country needs to meet. In turn, BCSD Ecuador is exploring the synergies between Vision 2050 and the country’s National Development Plan, called the National Plan for Good Living 2009-2013, which articulates public policy management and investment. Likewise, in Nicaragua, in presence of the Vice President, Vision 2050 was used as a framework for an agreement to promote sustainable development. This has led to the implementation of several joint projects between the private sector, the government, aid agencies and foundations.

Along similar lines, econsense in Germany organized a dialogue with the German government to discuss the country’s sustainability strategy and compare it with Vision 2050. BCSD Argentina presented Vision 2050 to the national Congress. A dialogue with public authorities on Vision 2050 was also held by BCSD Turkey in cooperation with the national business federation.

At its 2011 annual conference, the BCSD Zimbabwe held working sessions on Vision 2050’s pathways to 2020, i.e. the first 10 years described in the report as the turbulent teens. Groups selected ten elements from the pathways they considered to be the most relevant and important for Zimbabwe, and ranked them in importance. Access to basic services, infrastructure investment, and deeper local and environmental understanding were the top three topics chosen.

In Taiwan, the BCSD drew on Vision 2050 to host high-level dialogues between the private and public sectors on the infrastructure for green energy and Asian green cities. With support from its members, BCSD-Taiwan is currently exploring the possibility of developing a local Vision 2050.

“The unique feature of Vision 2050 is to bring together a diverse range of sectors to identify common challenges and how they might be overcome. The business and social communities are now jointly engaged in leading positive growth.”

Jacinta Syme,
Manager,
Sustainable Business Council New Zealand
“Brazil should become the world’s 5th largest economy by end of this decade and rank among the four biggest economies in 2050. It is crucial that we grow in a holistic way – not solely focusing on raising our GDP, but also on promoting human development and managing our natural resources sustainably. BCSD Brazil has joined forces with 42 stakeholders from business, government and civil society to develop a Brazilian vision and define a pathway toward a sustainable future by mid century.”

Marina Grossi, Executive President, BCSD Brazil (CEBDS)

In ICT, solar photovoltaics and LED technologies, one element of this vision could be to turn Taiwan into a pioneer in Asia for creating smart low-carbon cities. In Curacao, the BCSD uses Vision 2050 as a tool to improve its members’ management systems, particularly in the area of GHG emissions, health and safety, energy efficiency in buildings and production, mobility and waste.

In 2009, PBE set the Philippines Business Climate Imperative, a strategy to foster an understanding of environmental, social and economic scenarios, as well as a roadmap of sectoral and regional solutions to address climate change. Aligned with Vision 2050, the strategy describes a world where “one hundred+ million Filipinos are living well, within the limits of the planet.” Importantly, it stresses that this can only be achieved through a broad coalition with business committing the necessary resources.

BCSD Hungary has selected five elements of Vision 2050’s pathways (agriculture, buildings, energy, materials and ecosystems) and discussed them in dialogues with more than 120 participants from business, NGOs, universities, and the government. A report encapsulating the results from these discussions was recently published and will form the basis of further dialogues in 2012 with sectoral groups. The intent is to spur new projects and activities. Along similar lines, BCSD Colombia uses Vision 2050 as a local guide and platform for dialogue, with a focus on ecosystems, energy, forest and agriculture. NHO in turn works on long-term issues related to energy resources in Norway, looking at both renewables and oil and gas.

RBF in Poland used Vision 2050 to prioritize the issues that matter most to the country and engage in dialogue with a range of stakeholders. The group is currently working with the Ministry of Economy of Poland and PwC to craft a Vision 2050 for the country. Similarly, AED in Costa Rica uses Vision 2050 as a discussion platform to analyze trends and challenges both at a global and local level, and identify opportunities for business involvement.

Based on Vision 2050 and the EU’s Europe 2020 strategy, the CSR Development Centre in the Ukraine launched a project called Initiative 2020 to devise business solutions to local challenges. The project brings together different stakeholders (NGOs, business, governmental and international organizations, UN bodies, media, and universities) to design a bright future for the country. The group will capture the experiences of Ukraine’s leading companies and develop a model to foster more integration of social and environmental issues in business strategies. Along similar lines, BCSD Pakistan organized a series of seminars and leadership dialogues under the umbrella of Vision 2050.

In the United Kingdom, the BCSD held workshops in conjunction with UK government departments to answer the question: “How fit for purpose are today’s business models if we want 9 billion people to live well, and within the resource limits of the planet by 2050?” The workshops gave an unequivocal “thumbs down” to current business models and practices and concluded they were not adapted to meet the challenge. The BCSD’s current Vision 2050 program, called “Pathway workshops,” is exploring new ways of doing business and will turn these learnings into case studies.

In partnership with PwC, the Brazilian BCSD gathered representatives from UNEP, the Environment Ministry, business, NGOs and universities to define how Brazil could grow in a sustainable way. The outcome of this dialogue will serve as input to a Brazilian version of Vision 2050 to be released in 2012. SEV-BCSD Greece, in turn, organized a strategic workshop on “Formulating our own pathway” with Accenture, aiming at defining its strategic priorities for the next two years.

In Chile, Acción RSE has started a local Vision 2050 project. A range of opinion leaders were asked to describe their vision for Chile, as well as the country’s strengths and weaknesses in achieving these visions. Part of this information-
gathering process also included questions relating to the challenges Chilean business has to overcome to achieve sustainability. The outcome will be a local Vision 2050 developed in cooperation with business federations and government.

The United States BCSD uses Vision 2050 as an underlying guide and metric for projects in each of its five focus areas: By-Product Synergy; Business, Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services; Energy Efficiency in Buildings; US-China EcoPartnership; and Water. On its side, respACT Austrian BCSD is exploring what Vision 2050 means for the local agendas on CSR, sustainability reporting, diversity, supply chain management, energy and resource efficiency, and education. Along similar lines, Maala in Israel plans to use Vision 2050 as a new platform for discussions on the local corporate responsibility agenda.

In New Zealand, the BCSD has used Vision 2050 as a platform to help business address sustainability in a strategic manner, and initiated a project to develop a Vision 2050 for the country. This process was managed by their Future Leaders Team which involved engaging with CEOs and business organizations to create a roadmap specific to New Zealand. Outputs will include a report, mural and toolkit to pursue the conversation with business, government and civil society.
Contact list

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As of April 2012, the updated list can be downloaded from www.wbcsd.org/regional-network.aspx
About the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD)

The World Business Council for Sustainable Development is a CEO-led organization of forward-thinking companies that galvanizes the global business community to create a sustainable future for business, society and the environment. Together with its members, the council applies its respected thought leadership and effective advocacy to generate constructive solutions and take shared action. Leveraging its strong relationships with stakeholders as the leading advocate for business, the council helps drive debate and policy change in favor of sustainable development solutions.

The WBCSD provides a forum for its 200 member companies – who represent all business sectors, all continents and a combined revenue of more than $7 trillion – to share best practices on sustainable development issues and to develop innovative tools that change the status quo. The Council also benefits from a network of 60 national and regional business councils and partner organizations, a majority of which are based in developing countries.

www.wbcsd.org

Disclaimer

This publication is released in the name of the WBCSD. Like other WBCSD publications, it is the result of a collaborative effort by members of the secretariat and senior executives from member companies. A wide range of members reviewed drafts, thereby ensuring that the document broadly represents the perspective of the WBCSD membership. It does not mean, however, that every member company agrees with every word.

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Printer: Atar Roto Presse SA, Switzerland. Printed on paper containing fiber certified 100% to FSC labeled paper according to the mixed credit system, or certified 90% to PEFC labeled paper according to the percentage average method. 100% chlorine free. ISO 14001 certified mill.

ISBN: 978-3-940388-87-2