

## Future Visions – Green Cross International Alexander Likhotal

The world is at a historical crossroads. The choice is between a perfect storm of progressively deepening set of crises or expanding perspectives of unprecedented opportunities. However clearly understanding the implications, the world remains on a path to a systemic disaster of existential proportions.

Is sustainability still an option, or are we already doomed to “agonizing development”? Until recently, there were many signs showing we still have the choice but the window of opportunity is closing quickly. Despite overwhelming scientific evidence – and growing public concern – that our present development path is headed for calamity, governments are still not taking the challenge of achieving sustainable and equitable world development seriously: short-term national and financial concerns are consistently given top priority.

On top of that the international situation is becoming more and more complex and worrisome. As a result the issues related to sustainable development become more and more side-lined by the multiplying economic, social and geopolitical problems. The crisis in Ukraine, the turmoil in the Middle East, the future of the European Union, the political and economic trajectory of China and the growing importance of Africa, and finally Ebola epidemics have downgraded the MDG agenda into an academic if not a science fiction discussion rather than a major global challenge.

This requires transformational change. So far we have mainly seen a lot of rhetoric and political grandstanding about change. There is also a huge weight of very powerful vested interests actively holding back this transformation. But there have also been positive developments that should not be discounted. Civil society awareness, engagement – and impatience – is rising across the world and across the generations. Progress on many key human development goals has advanced. Some governments moved to invest more deeply in renewable energy. More businesses are voluntarily adopting sustainable goals and practices. The impacts of climate change are being clearly felt and increasingly recognized, putting growing pressure on governments to act.

The changes at hand offer the potential for an economic paradigm change – creating a renewables-based system, which enhances access, health and security, creates jobs and safeguards the environment. Actualisation of this potential requires a different way of thinking about economy.

Rethinking economy means policy makers need to consider the economic system as a whole, linking areas previously considered unrelated – such as energy and jobs, water and sanitation and healthcare, rural development and security, governance and development. Herein lies the biggest change: adopting a truly holistic approach, which not only takes into account the interests of short-term growth, but provides the opportunity of sustainable and inclusive prosperity.

Fortunately, many good and workable ideas are already in the pipeline, the technology is ready to deploy. People, businesses and governments must now embrace its potential.