



GreenPeak at the World Economic Forum

A somewhat different blog this time—

The relevance for GreenPeak of being selected as one of the 34 Technology Pioneers 2009 of the World Economic Forum can only be appreciated by going the WEF Conference in Davos and understand what an important get-together this is. It is a by invitation only conference attended by about 1,500 political, religious and business leaders of the world and a platform for exchange of ideas of things that are relevant at this moment in the world of today.

Let me side-step the question about the value of this very expensive event, as I heard many people with very mixed feelings about it. But the overall mood was very gloomy: the financial crisis, the economic crisis, the food crisis, the water crisis, the crisis of global warming, etc.: there is all reason to be overwhelmed. At the same time, it is very clear that technology as is being developed by GreenPeak will be part of the solution of some of the problems, so all the more reason to be more than motivated to continue and to push on!

Big problems can be solved when everyone in his own place is not getting bogged down!

Let me share with you some of the highlights. I definitely was impressed and motivated by the speech of the Chinese premier Wen Jiabao at the beginning of the conference. A clear vision, a clear list of items that are on his working list, courageous expressing his confidence of 8% growth ("it will be hard, but we will work at it"). At the same time I learnt to be very cautious with politicians, as there may be big differences between a speech and the real items being worked, for instance the call for "transparency" was loud and clear, but at the same time gives to think. Another highlight was the speech (maybe more a sermon) from former Archbishop Desmond Tutu, stressing that we all are one family, and what this means in terms of caring for each other and for our descendents in terms of taking care of the mother earth (in respect of pollution and global warming). It is impressive to see such a person realizing what he has achieved and hearing his call for dignity overall.

The most "comical" moment was clearly that Vladimir Putin was urging the USA not to give too much state support to public companies (banks or car makers), they had some experience in Russia and that was not too positive. [Who could have thought that half a year ago, that the USA would be accused of practices from a communistic era? ☺] When Bill Clinton was asked later what he thought about that statement, he clearly saw the humor by replying, that hopefully the capitalistic system would be working for them (=Russia).

Summarizing such a big event is probably hard, but one take away clearly is how interrelated the world is and therefore how interrelated the world's problems are – calling for "world-wide" solutions. At the same time I realized how difficult it is to get so many different leaders from some many different backgrounds on the same page.



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What struck me in particular is the different “languages” being spoken by business people and politicians, or maybe better formulated: I better understand why politicians are so difficult to understand. Politicians rising to the top are usually smart people and very good communicators. I found for instance UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown very clear, straightforward and humoristic – quite different than what he is known for. But at the same time, for a politician, if the best solution would be negative for their own voters, it is impossible for them to support it.

One concrete example of what is making things so incredible difficult is that on one hand everybody realizes that in the current economic crisis trade barriers should be even further lowered to increase economic activity. But if for instance the US tax-payers’ dollars that are used to support the car industry, would demand to be used on US steel (US Steel), it reduces world trade. This made the Brazilian delegation joke that in that case they probably should decide to buy the US steel factories themselves.

So, where business people have the freedom to address each problem with what they think is the best solution, politicians need to weigh how to rally support on any possible solution, even to the point that I could not avoid the feeling that politicians are paid to “nurture” problems, instead of solving them, but that is probably not a totally fair thing to say. More fair would be to say that if a politician loses his voters, any selected solution will be hard to be implemented anyhow.

Do you have comments or suggestions? I appreciate your feedback!

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