



Welcome

Prof. Jeffrey D. Sachs

Introduction by John Mutter

John Mutter: Good Morning. If you'd take your seats please. Good morning. My name is John Mutter, I am deputy director and associate vice provost of the Earth Institute at Columbia University. It's my distinct pleasure to welcome you to the third Columbia University's Earth Institute "State of the Planet" conference. We're joined here today by scholars, practitioners, journalists, and the greater Columbia University community for a wide-ranging discussion on issues central to the well-being of our earth and its inhabitants.

We have a very full and a very tight schedule. I'm going to be your moderator today, so I get to say things like, "Please turn off your cell phones, please turn off anything that makes a beep or rings." With respect to courtesy for others, please make sure that nothing interrupts the presentations. This year our "State of the Planet" conference is included as part of the University's 250th anniversary celebrations. I hope you've been able to attend other of those events, and in particular I hope you will be able to attend the event on April 22 and 23 on the Earth's future. The information is described in your information package.

Let me thank the 250th anniversary committee for their support in making this event possible. I'd also like to take a minute to recognize two of Columbia's trustees, Marilyn Laurie and Richard Witten. I also want to recognize the sponsors of this event, and there are four. Merck Pharmaceuticals—you probably recognize the name—they are one of the world's leading pharmaceutical companies. One you may not know is Praxair, they are one of the leading . . . world's leaders in producing industrial gases, and provide services and technologies for almost a million customers in forty countries worldwide. The television series NOVA, that for forty years has been the leading television series bringing science into America's classrooms, in living rooms. And classrooms!

The principal sponsor is, of course, the Earth Institute at Columbia University.

The Institute aims to be *the* world leader in mobilizing the sciences to fight global poverty and to promote sustainable development. Our central claim is that to achieve this, we must mobilize both the natural and the social sciences, together and in unison. And you will see that theme develop during the day, with many of the speakers.

It's fitting, then, that we begin our discussions with one each of the world's leading social scientists and natural scientists. First, on the social science side, let me introduce Jeffrey Sachs. Jeffrey will set the stage for today's events. He is, of course, director of the Earth Institute and Quetelet Professor of Sustainable Development and professor of health policy and management here at Columbia University. He is also special advisor to United Nations secretary-general Kofi Annan on the millennium development goals that aim to achieve poverty alleviation and a many other social ills by the year 2015. Jeff joined the Earth Institute at Columbia after speaking at our last "State of the Planet" conference. I won't claim cause and effect, but I will claim some association. As director of the Earth Institute, he works with more than eight hundred people at Columbia in disciplines ranging from the earth sciences to biology, ecology, engineering, health sciences and the social sciences. They work individually on all the intricate components of the Earth's system and collectively to meet the challenges of sustainable development. May I introduce Jeffrey Sachs.

The Challenge of Sustainable Development

Jeffrey Sachs: Thank you so much, John, and thank you, ladies and gentlemen for joining us today for what I think is going to be a very important and very stimulating discussion. We're very honored at your presence and your interest, and we're also especially honored at the incredible turnout of many of the world's leading scientists to be with us today. I can't think of a more distinguished group of colleagues that we have from all over the world to talk about these challenging problems.

I want to start by thanking Columbia University for allowing a very unusual initiative like the Earth Institute to take off and to flourish. This is an initiative that is about ten years old now. I'm very honored to have joined as director a year and a half ago, but what I arrived to was certainly one of the most stimulating and unusual and bold initiatives that one could find anywhere in the world. The Earth Institute is an attempt to take advantage of the great knowledge that we have and to put it to use, and to harness it across disciplines and employ it around the world for meeting the challenge of

sustainable development. Let me just say a word about what that challenge is. It has two words: *sustainable*, by which we mean managing our lives in a way which isn't going to send the world over a cliff of social conflict or the cliff of environmental catastrophe that we are at risk of if we continue on our current course. *Development* is equally important in that rubric, and involves the struggle to create economic prosperity and thus close the gap between the rich and the poor in the world, a gap that's larger than at any time in human history. We live in a time when we have such vast wealth, knowledge and capability in our country, and yet at the same time thousands of people around the world die of extreme poverty every single day. Their extreme poverty means they lack a few cents to gain access to a drug that could keep them alive, or they're chronically hungry and therefore their immune systems are chronically suppressed and they find themselves vulnerable to diseases that would be mere passing episodes for a healthy person but which will take their lives.

The Earth Institute is dedicated to pursuing the challenges of sustainable development in partnership with our scientist colleagues around the world, and in partnership with colleagues and interested individuals of goodwill that are capable of a great deal of good all over the world. We've had a remarkable response to the invitations to this meeting, probably because there's a great public hunger for some real information. Not only do we face challenges of incredible dimensions, but I think many of us feel that we're living in a world these days of constant "spin," when the name of the game is character attack and character assassination and grandstanding rather than serious scientific contemplation of the evidence, the risks, and the possible alternatives that we face. What we hope to do today is to have a real discussion, a real laying out of the evidence, and then follow up tomorrow with several intensive panels of leading scientists in the critical areas that we'll be exploring today, with the goal of issuing a statement tomorrow afternoon that represents the consensus of those scientists that are here, which represent the *crème de la crème* of the scientific community.

Mobilizing Science to Close Social Divides

One of our inspirations is a set of famous lectures celebrating their 45th anniversary today, which I reread over the weekend because they're always worth rereading, and that's *The Two Cultures* of C. P. Snow. This famous essay describes the great divide between science and society, and points out how much we depend on science and how little the broad public, and even the literary community (Snow could have included the social-science and public-

policy community), understands of the scientific underpinnings on which we depend.

What's remarkable about Snow's essay, and I commend it to all of you, is that not only did he talk about the gap between science and society, but he also talked about the gap between the rich and the poor. Already forty-five years ago he was very much onto the theme that mobilizing global science to close the incredible gaps between those who have and those who have not is at the top of the world's agenda for peace and security. His call 45 years ago was not adequately heeded, and it's one of the reasons why we're here today.

What's also striking in reading *The Two Cultures* is that we have many more than two cultures that we have to bridge, and that's what I'd like to highlight just to explain the purposes of today before turning the podium over to one of our greatest scientists.

First we have a divide among the sciences themselves. Even the physical sciences don't adequately talk to each other. One of our lecturers today, Professor E. O. Wilson, has written the most scintillating and eye-opening account of how we need to close that divide in his great book, *Consilience*. Second, we have a profound divide between the physical sciences and the public policy sciences, and the Earth Institute is an attempt to close that divide. It's shocking how many of our public policies are discussed without any adequate scientific base. We are honored to have with us today one of the great leading scientists and director of the great scientific enterprise NOAA. This is one of the attempts of the United States to close the divide between policy and science, but it's often an uphill struggle.

We have another divide between the sciences, government, the business community, and broader civil society. These are various groups of stakeholders in our society that rarely speak to each other, so we're delighted that in the room today are leaders of nongovernmental organizations, public-policy officials, scientists, policy analysts, and business leaders. Unless we dialogue across all of these sectors in what we call analytical deliberation, we're not going to solve the problems that we're talking about today. We need business at the table, we need environmental groups at the table, we need the scientists at the table, we need our political leaders at the table; today is a small microcosm of the attempt to do that in the longer term.

Another divide, one that C. P. Snow did refer to, is the incredible divide

between the rich and the poor, where we again are falling woefully short. I find it stunning for our own safety in the world, ladies and gentlemen, that the United States will spend 450 billion dollars this year on the military, but only 13 billion dollars on development assistance. This kind of imbalance of our efforts to close the gap between rich and poor is a matter of extreme danger for our own security, not to mention the survival and security of the world's poorest people.

The final divide is not between two cultures, but between the innumerable cultures of the world. Are we really going to fall into a conflict of civilizations, almost too shocking to imagine? Or are we going to find ways to bridge the divide, to treat each other with respect as human beings and look for the true evidence and the best paths forward in which we can have a shared and sustainable prosperity on the planet? That's why we're here today, that's why people from so many walks of life and so many areas of expertise have come together, and I think it's extraordinarily gratifying that you have done so. It's an honor for us, and it's very exciting as we ponder these great issues over the next two days.

