

**Soroptimist International**

**St Albans & District**

**Date:** 24.01.2022

**Time:** 7.30-9pm

**Venue:** Zoom call

**Presentation:** What’s next after COP 26? How do we achieve climate justice particularly for women in Africa?

**Speakers**:

* Mike Wilkins Executive Director/Professor of Practice in the Centre for Climate Finance and Investment, Imperial College Business School: Progress at COP26 in Glasgow and the Key Challenges which Remain
* Estherine Lisinge-Fotabong, Director, Programme Innovation and Planning, NEPAD, the new partnership for Africa’s Development: The impact of climate change on women in Africa and the financial aid needed to achieve climate justice.

**Please visit the website for the presentation materials and images from the event** [**www.sigbi.org/st-albans/24jan**](http://www.sigbi.org/st-albans/24jan)

**MINUTES**

Barbara Saunders (BS) chaired the meeting and initiated proceedings by welcoming the audience to the third meeting on climate change and the climate emergency organised by the Club’s Planet Team and welcomed the two eminent speakers Mike Wilkins (MW) and Estherine Lisinge-Fotabong (ELF).

BS then announced the Soroptimist vision and mission before handing over to Linda Shall (LS) who introduced MW whom she had heard previously presenting his views at a conference on the outcome from COP26, next steps and challenges and which she knew would be appreciated by the Soroptimists.

MW thanked her for the invite and noted his background above but also his previous role at S&P Global Ratings, an international credit rating agency where he worked for three decades and therefore explained his views on sustainable issues were from a financial perspective. He noted that his presentation was based on a report “Mind The Gap: Pledges At COP26 Give Hope But Significant Shortfall Still Exists” written whilst at S&P and LS advised she could send copies on request and the report is also available to download from the Club’s website – see link above..

MW set the context of COP 26 noting at the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in Paris in 2015 (COP21), a landmark agreement was reached to mobilise a global response to the threat of climate change in the form of the Paris Agreement. The agreement's long-term goal was to keep the increase in global average temperature to well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels, and to limit the increase to 1.5°C, since this would substantially reduce the risks and effects of climate change and avoid catastrophic implications. Predicted rates however are estimated to exceed this to 4.4 °C as measured by the IPCC (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change)

MW continued that at COP 26 held in Glasgow:

* 192 signatories made new pledges on methane gas pollution, deforestation, coal financing, and a notable U.S.-China deal (reducing methane and direct carbon capture technologies) with the phasing down on coal seen as a big achievement, particularly important for countries such as India, Vietnam, Philippines which as developing countries, had increased their coal exposure in the need to continue to grow to fit in with the modern economy
* There was also the completion of rules on carbon trading (how countries are incentivised to reduce carbon emissions with the emission trading system (ETS) where emitters can trade emission units to meet their emission targets) in response to Article 6 of the Paris Agreement on climate change where historically there had been disagreement e.g. in relation to double counting and the ability to offset carbon credits vs actually just reducing emissions which just resulted in ‘green washing’ (a lack of credibility on corporate commitment or claims)

MW explained:

* About financing of 1. climate change mitigation meaning reducing the sources of greenhouse gas emissions e.g. increasing energy efficiency or promoting renewable energy sources and 2. climate change adaptation, namely being prepared for worst impacts e.g. building coastal defences in response to rising sea levels, weather resistant activities
* Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC), pledges made by countries in terms of reducing their emissions which are measured over 5 year periods but are still below requirements
* Net Zero – not just about reducing emissions but that this involves carbon capture as well
* That the summit in Glasgow brought everyone together for negotiations with a pledge do more and not just countries but also the private sector and how big companies and finance were stepping up. Glasgow’s Financial Alliance For Net Zero was cited where asset owners such as insurance and pension funds are committing to move the flow of capital from ‘dirty’ to greener investments. He noted that India’s pledge of 2070 vs 2050 by most other countries to achieve net zero seen as disappointing
* The introduction of the Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures established by Mark Carney (former Governor of the Bank of England) making it mandatory for companies to disclose their approach to climate change including risks and governance.

MW summarised by saying that the UN Summit had been seen as a successful in bringing everyone together but that the proof will be at the next COP (27) in Egypt with progress on ratcheted commitments scrutinised.

Questions involved:

* The significant gap in funding from developed countries and the commitment issues associated with climate change adaptation with metrics for climate change adaptation vs mitigation being different. MW elaborated on the social and economic costs of adaptation e.g. damage caused to infrastructure due to severe weather events with considerable costs for insurance purposes which were tangible but that social implications could be captured by measurement relating to migration or increased mortality rates
* How do we stop powerful fossil fuel companies working to weaken countries’ commitment to net zero? MW noted that when companies emitting fossil fuels are not transitioning to invest in renewable technologies and carbon capture, then they will not receive funding so their cost of capital will increase and highlighted the regulatory and client pressures to do this
* nuclear energy being considered as part of EU Green Taxonomy. MW commented that nuclear has a role in low carbon power generation but clearly there is a need for commitment to store and decommission.

With MW thanked for his time and presentation, Ameeta Sabharwal (AS) proceeded to welcome Estherine Lisinge-Fotabong (ELF) who highlighted the following in her presentation:

* That the United Nations raised awareness about how climate change is causing serious effects and impact on the lives of people
* The implications for Africa that whilst they only contribute 4% to greenhouse gas emissions, the population are already struggling and require funding for climate change adaptation where the impact has already been considerably extreme e.g. people losing jobs/livelihoods and particularly women so support needs to take into consideration those aspects already lost and those communities already impacted and suffering
* She questioned how compensation works for those communities, making sure it reaches those impacted directly
* How Glasgow showed a commitment to increase resourcing primarily from the private sector but that those pledges need to materialise and be directed appropriately at grass roots level
* The skillset required to be able to understand complexities of carbon accounting and reporting and the need for Africa to take advantage of carbon trading, an area where historically they have not been active
* Impact specifically on women – the reliance on agrarian societies where women work and their role within the family - undertaking domestic chores, looking after family members and drop out of school. Also first to be sacrificed with child marriages arranged to reduce financial burden
* How women are the first respondents to climate change which sees women deprived from resources and jobs – a real human impact. For example, with women responsible for food production but faced with rising sea levels means they cannot transport food to market and therefore this goes to waste due to lack of storage facilities. How livelihoods are dependent on this
* That climate risk heighten risks of girls being exposed to violence and exploitation and exacerbates the poverty level of communities
* Impact of COVID has shown inequalities which exist and exacerbated as measures put in place have impacted daily activities

ELF called for greater measures addressing:

* COP 27: given this is in Egypt on the African continent, how the priority should be on addressing climate change adaptation issues from vulnerable communities where women play such a key role
* Mobilisation - to ensure environmental resources are handled sustainably such as tackling deforestation
* Engaging in discussions at all levels (developed and developing countries) to ensure adaptation and mitigation can be fully supported – bring awareness and steps for resources. Need for collective effort.
* The priority to therefore identify recovery packages to build skillsets/education and resiliencies for girls with concrete actions and the need positive discrimination including supporting programmes for change.
* Need to bring previous silent voices of women into climate change so struggles and implications are fully articulated and that leadership/training/education is provided and ensuring play an active role in climate policy making
* How women are already resilient at supporting their families and how the collective voice can ensure they build their own capacity for change.
* Need for advocacy including ensuring NGOs work with communities at a grass roots level for there is a risk of reduced development assistance and hence support should not be predicated on the private sector alone.

Questions included:

* How women get involved in policy making and decisions. ELF admitted it was a challenge when women operate as individuals but if they come together with a unified voice they can prompt collective action
* In response to women being at the negotiating table at COP27, ELF felt confident about giving them a platform in Egypt for example via the Woman in Agribusiness Forum and that they will participate and that her role and organisation can empower women to ensure their voices are an input into the process.

BS thanked ELF for her time and noting the alignment of her experience with the values of Soroptimists, highlighting how critical her work is to transform communities and inherently that of women and girls.

Nicky Bloom 25-1-22