Opportunities not to be missed

In a recent study published in the well-respected journal Science, international researchers reported that certain planetary boundaries have been crossed. Those boundaries are climate change; loss of biosphere integrity; land-system change; and altered cycles for phosphorus and nitrogen, two elements essential to the fertility of soil. Moreover, the Earth’s current population is over seven billion and continues to grow.

The researchers concluded that humanity has now crossed the risk thresholds. So what can we do to prevent the Earth from shifting to a new state, one that is very different and most likely much less favourable to the development of human society?

First opportunity: the countries that drive policy decisions will be meeting in Paris from 30 November to 11 December 2015 for the 21st session of the Conference of the Parties (COP21) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change. The goal of the 2015 conference in Paris is to extend the 1997 Kyoto Protocol, now 18 years old. This conference is crucial because the outcome must be an international climate agreement to limit the global temperature increase to 2 degrees Celsius. With the recent climate agreement between China and the United States, the two countries with the world’s highest CO₂ emissions, we can be reasonably optimistic.

Second opportunity: every industry, every business, must work towards maintaining a healthy, liveable planet, creating good working conditions and thereby creating value in a responsible – and sustainable – manner. The postal sector has taken the initiative to do just that: it has a plan setting out 20 priority actions for sustainable development, which it developed several years ago; it measures the greenhouse gas emissions of its operators; and it recently introduced the first industry-specific carbon offset fund, called the Postal Carbon Fund.

The postal sector is leading the way for other industries. Of course, this is not the first time it has done so. However, this time the fate of the planet is at stake and, by extension, the sustainability of postal operators. Let’s not miss out on these vital opportunities. Let’s increase our efforts to be responsible Posts and achieve sustainable development. Let’s reconcile economy with ecology.
Using the Indian postal network to deliver services and information to citizens

To leverage the assets of the postal network, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that post offices in rural areas could be used to deliver various services and information, including important government information, to individual households in India. He added that the postal network could become a driving force for the economy, much like Indian Railways, with substantial benefits for the Indian population.

Sources: Jagran Post

Poland Post launches its first e-service

Poczta Polska, Poland's designated postal operator, has launched its first-ever digital service on behalf of a government organization.

It is an identity verification service that forms part of the government's electronic public administration services platform (ePUAP).

Launched as a pilot program, the service enables all citizens to set up a secure digital profile. The process is then verified and finalized at a participating post office (five post offices in Warsaw are piloting the service) upon presentation of an ID card.

Once the profile has been properly created, citizens are able to access government services online, including secure payment services for social security and the setting up of a business.

Depending on the outcome of the pilot, the service could be extended to other post offices across the country.

Sources: Post and Parcel
© Post and Parcel photo

Parcel automats now available to Correos customers

Following the example of Germany, Austria, Denmark, Luxembourg, Lithuania, Switzerland, the Czech Republic and France, Spain's designated operator, Correos, has decided to expand its services to customers by offering parcel automats. These automats, under the brand name of CityPaq, will be available at 60 locations across the country in 2015.

Sources: Post and Parcel

Postal Sector Initiatives

Canada Post works to help reduce downtown traffic

The mail carrier announced that it was working to change how postal workers operate in the downtown core in order to help reduce traffic and prevent congestion. “We recognize that changes to operating procedures must be made by everyone who serves the downtown core,” Canada Post stated.

The Post is looking at how its pick-up and delivery operations in the downtown core can be improved and has assembled a senior team to develop and implement a plan to quickly address the issue.

The first step involves shifting delivery stop times and pick-up times to off-peak hours, such as between 13.00 and 15.00 or after 19.00.

Source: Toronto Sun
© Toronto Sun photo

Parcel automats now available to Correos customers
**Deutsche Post DHL introduces the StreetScooter**

Deutsche Post DHL, the world's leading postal and logistics group, has signed an agreement to acquire StreetScooter GmbH, a former start-up that is committed to developing affordable electric vehicles. As a result of the agreement, which is still subject to antitrust approval, the company will acquire the development and production rights to the vehicles, along with the employees of StreetScooter GmbH.

StreetScooter GmbH is an important spin-off of RWTH Aachen and a consortium of around 80 industrial companies in the automotive industry and related sectors. It was established in 2010 and employs a staff of 70. Since 2013, approximately 200 StreetScooters a year have been produced at the former Talbot/Bombardier plant in Aachen.

Sources: DPDHL  
© DPDHL photo

**Belgium’s bpost helps locate stolen bicycles**

Belgium's bpost has developed a product to help identify and locate missing bikes. As a result, bikes equipped with the device will become less of a target for thieves.

Bpost launched CycloSafe on 15 September 2014. The security device contains an electronic chip, and can be easily affixed to the bike but very hard to remove. All CycloSafe customers can register their bike at www.CycloSafe.be, and use the site to report the loss or theft of their bike. Letter carriers can identify any bike equipped with CycloSafe. Police use a more high-performance scanner to identify CycloSafe bikes that have been reported stolen.

Bpost launched the service in Brussels, Bruges, Ghent and Leuven, four cities with a high rate of bike theft. A small number of letter carriers will be able to identify bikes equipped with CycloSafe. Systematic identification will also be rolled out in other cities once bpost has the operational requirements in place. If bpost is alerted of the disappearance of a bike somewhere in Belgium, a letter carrier will be able to scan the bikes located around the area of the theft.

If the scan identifies a lost bike, CycloSafe alerts the local police, who can identify the bike that has been reported lost and contact the owner.

CycloSafe was developed in cooperation with Zetes, the Belgian expert in electronic identification that produces the device and makes its bike data registration system available.

The device can be purchased for €29.99 at www.CycloSafe.be and at various bike shops. The purchase price includes three years of bpost detection.

The CycloSafe initiative is part of bpost’s strategy to offer new products and services that put letter carriers’ local knowledge and presence across Belgium to good use.

Sources: bpost
Solar panels to improve the operational capacity of Benin’s postal sorting centre

As part of the multi-year integrated project to improve the operational capacity of Benin’s postal sorting centre, the UPU and Benin Post purchased photovoltaic panels to ensure a continuous source of energy and Internet availability at the sorting centre.

The recurrent power cuts and outages in Benin were hindering the proper functioning of the sorting centre and the services operating on the same premises (EMS, quality control centre, and IPS equipment).

Through this project, Benin Post will be able to meet performance requirements in the scanning and transmission of EDI messages, and in so doing will be eligible for rate bonuses and will improve mail processing times, all while reducing its environmental impact by using solar energy, a renewable and very eco-friendly energy source.

Launch of an online carbon calculation and reporting tool

To improve the calculation and reporting of the postal sector’s greenhouse gas emissions, the Sustainable Development Project Group recommended the development of an online tool. The Council of Administration approved the proposal, with the UPU International Bureau taking on the responsibility of finding the necessary funding and developing the tool before launching a pilot project with a small number of Posts. France has committed to contributing funding to the online tool but more funding is needed, so all contributors are welcome!

Using an online calculation and reporting tool is expected to provide the following benefits

- simplified data collection
- better data quality
- higher participation rates
- alignment of the inventory schedule with the reporting needs of Posts
- automatic production of individual reports for each Post
- use of individual reports to meet national reporting requirements or voluntary commitments
- verification of reduction targets through recalculation formulas
- facilitation of audit processes by means of tracked changes
- better calculations and information provided to operators for their participation in carbon offsetting

The International Bureau hopes to launch the online tool by early 2016.

Contact: anne-claire.blet@upu.int
The Caribbean region organizes its first sustainable development seminar

In November 2014 in Barbados, 14 Posts attended the first Caribbean sustainable development seminar, a regional priority established in 2012.

The 19 participants were able to discuss such topics as the role of Posts in implementing regional health campaigns (the Chikungunya campaign, for example); the importance of promoting diversity among postal employees; the improvements to be made to vehicle fleets, buildings and mail pick-up and delivery processes in order to reduce the carbon footprint of Posts; and the role of Posts in the purchase of eco-friendly materials. With the help of experts from the United States Postal Service, participants also received training on how to manage the risks relating to natural disasters and were able to put together an emergency list to be used before, during and after a disaster.

The United Nations Development Programme Resident Coordinator for the region and the Minister of the Interior of Barbados commended the holding of the seminar, reiterating the crucial role that Posts play in the development of a sustainable and inclusive society.

Next meeting of the Sustainable Development Project Group

As part of the UPU Postal Operations Council and Council of Administration sessions, the Sustainable Development Project Group will hold its next meeting on 16 April 2015, from 9.30 to 12.30, in the Abubakar Argungu Room at the UPU in Berne, Switzerland.

On the agenda: the results of the fifth postal sector carbon inventory, the setting of a sector-wide emissions reduction target, the progress made in the launch of the Postal Carbon Fund, an update on the 2013–2016 work plan, and the preparation of documents and resolutions for the 26th Congress.

The ad hoc group on risk management will meet the day before, on 15 April, from 10.30 to 13.30.
Sharing sustainable development audits of our suppliers

As part of its responsible procurement policy, France’s La Poste conducts audits based on sustainable development criteria. Through these audits, La Poste can operationally verify the accuracy of a supplier’s statements (environmental, social and societal processes, etc.) when a call for tenders is issued.

Given that Posts engage in many common activities and therefore have similar procurement needs, La Poste has proposed that Posts share these audits to reduce costs. Shared audits could be a practical solution for the following types of suppliers:

- suppliers of banking ATMs and terminals (Wincor, DBD, NCR and DAT),
- manufacturers of mail or parcel sorting machines,
- suppliers of computer (HP, Lenovo, etc.) or telephone (Samsung, Nokia, Apple) equipment.

Sharing audits could help in the application of postal sector requirements, in particular in the area of environmental protection. Anyone interested is invited to contact stephanie.scouppe@laposte.fr

The International Labour Organization notes an increase in female leadership in the business sector

While women are still under-represented in top management, the number of women in senior and middle management positions has increased over the last 20 years, a new study by the International Labour Organization (ILO) Bureau for Employers’ Activities finds, (in the postal sector, the women represent 1/3 of the managers).

According to the report Women in Business and Management: Gaining Momentum, in 80 of the 108 countries for which ILO data is available, the proportion of women managers has increased during this period.

“Our research is showing that women’s ever increasing participation in the labour market has been the biggest engine of global growth and competitiveness,” says Deborah France-Massin, Director of the ILO Bureau for Employers’ Activities.
An increasing number of studies are also demonstrating positive links between women’s participation in top decision making teams and structures and business performance. But there is a long way to go before we achieve true gender equality in the workplace, especially when it comes to top management positions.

Only 5% or less of the CEOs of the world’s largest corporations are women. The larger the company, the less likely the head will be a woman.

All-male company boards are still common but are decreasing in number, with women attaining 20% or more of all board seats in a handful of countries. A global survey quoted in the study shows that Norway has the highest global proportion of companies (13.3%) with a woman as company board chairperson, followed by Turkey (11.1%).

“It is critical for more women to reach senior management positions in strategic areas to build a pool of potential candidates for top jobs such as CEO or company presidents,” explained Ms France-Massin. “However, ‘glass walls’ still exist with the concentration of women in certain types of management functions like HR, communications and administration,” she added.

Today, women own and manage over 30% of all businesses, but they are more likely to be found in micro and small enterprises. Getting more women to grow their businesses is not only critical for equality but also for national development, underlines the report.

The report provides statistics on women in management and in business for most countries from all regions and at all levels of development. It also contains data on the gender pay gap at management and lower levels, as well as statistics on women’s achievements in education.

It identifies the growing momentum building around the world to advance women to higher levels of management and lists a selection of the numerous initiatives from various sectors.

Sources: Radio des Nations Unies

2015 sustainability trends

Scales tip on global climate change action

With rising civic activism, surging numbers of corporate commitments, and more decisive action by local and national governments, global climate change diplomacy is showing new signs of life. The November 2014 agreement between the U.S. and China to cut emissions by 2030 breaks the long-standing impasse over the respective responsibilities of rich and poor nations to take action.

In that agreement, the U.S. pledged to cut emissions between 26% to 28% below 2005 levels by 2025, while China agreed to peak emissions around 2030.

Furthermore, in December 2014, 200 countries signed the Lima Accord, which, for the first time in history, commits all nations to cutting greenhouse gas emissions. In early 2015, every country will submit detailed domestic policy plans that will form the basis of the treaty to be signed in Paris next year.

Finally, more than 25 countries have pledged $10 billion to the Green Climate Fund, established to help developing nations adapt to climate change.
Water makes waves

From droughts in California and Ohio to continuing water shortages in India and Brazil’s Sao Paolo, the impact of water scarcity on populations, economies and companies has been felt worldwide. Global water stress is fast becoming a major economic, political and social issue, and a supply chain risk to which companies are responding with a range of initiatives and innovations.

The World Economic Forum identified “water crises” as one of the top ten issues of greatest concern to the global economy in 2014, the third highest risk ranked overall.

In addition, a growing number of companies recognize water scarcity risks as material and are including them as a financial concern in annual reports. For example, the Dr Pepper Snapple Group noted that water supply challenges could put $2.5 billion of its future sales at risk.

The clock is ticking for energy companies

The International Energy Agency predicts that solar energy will become the dominant source of electricity by 2050. Renewable energy made record gains in 2014, with drops in technology costs and rapid expansion of capacity and investments.

Utility giant E.ON’s announcement that it would split its operations to focus on clean energy raises the prospect of success for Germany’s Energiewende program, which aims to entirely eliminate fossil fuels.

The fossil fuel divestment movement saw gains in 2014, with increased civic participation and over $50 billion divested by more than 180 institutions and close to 700 individuals. The notion of “stranded assets” is gaining recognition as a risk factor affecting mainstream investment decisions.

Pressure mounts on corporations to eradicate slavery

The number of global human rights violations has been rising in recent years, with a large share of infringements attributed to workers’ rights violations, land grabs, and illegal supply chain practices in emerging markets. As stakeholders point out the limitations of supply chain audits, companies have been pressured to raise accountability standards and implement new measures.

Human rights violations have risen by 70% in the last six years, according to Human Rights Watch and Maplecroft. Government repression and conflicts have been key factors in the increase but many violations are also attributed to corporate actions.

The Modern Slavery Bill that was debated in the U.K. Parliament will require businesses to report efforts towards eradicating modern slavery from their supply chains.

The International Labour Organization estimates that forced labour generates $150 billion in illegal profits each year.
The promise of consumer engagement

Corporate sustainability leaders have recognized that achieving long-lasting change requires reaching beyond company-wide initiatives. As corporations look for innovative ways to engage consumers in positive behaviour change, millennials are being recognized as a key demographic, with the number of youth engagement initiatives on sustainability and environmental issues growing steadily.

A total of 29 leading corporations and non-profits, including Coca-Cola, IKEA, and PepsiCo, have joined forces to launch “Collectively”, a digital platform intended to engage millennials in sustainable lifestyles.

Several companies have published research about the success of marketing initiatives specifically targeted at millennials. But findings are mixed, with some indicating that millennials are key drivers in sustainable consumption while others show no significant variations across age groups.

The number of apps that enable consumers to live more sustainable lifestyles and make ethical buying decisions has seen huge growth, from information on product credentials to the availability of sharing economy services.

Source: SustainAbility 2015

Getting around town as an eco-citizen

Our transportation choices are important and can be a way for us to be environmentally friendly. To be an eco-citizen, before we head out the door, we need to stop and ask ourselves what form of transportation would be the cleanest.

Whenever possible, we should opt for clean methods of transportation that are better for the planet, such as walking, biking, using a scooter, or roller blading.

Videoconferencing and teleconferencing are also options that eliminate the need for any travel.

Using a car should be kept to a minimum. If a car is necessary, drive one with low CO2 emissions, adopt fuel-efficient driving techniques or try carpooling.

Trains cause less damage to the planet than airplanes: for a medium-haul flight, the approximate energy consumption for one passenger is 25 kg of carbon equivalent per 500 km (and 50 kg of all polluting gas emissions combined).

If you absolutely need to fly, there are carbon offsetting solutions, such as donating to a reforestation project.
**Rethinking mobility: Good ideas from around the world**

**EASY-TO-READ METRO MAPS**

Even with a map, it is easy to get lost in the metro in places like London, Paris and Barcelona. Jug Cerovic, a French-Serbian architect, took the initiative to redesign American, European and Asian metro maps. The goal: to standardize the presentation. Now, city centres are enlarged so that the multiple lines and connections are visible. The trains are represented by coloured lines going horizontally, vertically or at 45 degrees. Angles are gently curved. It took two years, but now we can look at a metro map and easily find our way around.

**CAR IN A BOX**

Delivered as a kit, this car comes with either a two- or four-seat chassis and can be assembled in less than an hour. The designs can be downloaded for free from the OSVehicles (Open Source Vehicles) website. Add the motor of your choice (electric, hybrid, internal combustion) and design it exactly how you want it, all for the reasonable cost of 3,000 euros.

**KUTSUPLUS, OR CARPOOLING BY BUS**

Part mini-bus, part mini-taxi, Kutsuplus is a hybrid form of transportation for getting around Helsinki. The mini-bus, which seats nine, is reserved and paid for by smartphone. Slightly more expensive than traditional public transit and 50% less expensive than a taxi, the mini-bus can be used for private trips or be shared with other users. An algorithm determines the best route for all passengers.

**BIKE TO SCHOOL CHALLENGE**

How can you convince students to bike to school? Issue a challenge! Every May since 2008, Scott Cowan has organized the Bike to School Challenge. For three weeks, students from five schools in the Cleveland, Ohio, area must bike to school. The more biking they do, the more points they earn. And they get double the points if they wear a helmet. And of course, the grand prize is a brand-new bike. In 2014, 4,500 young people took part. The Bike to School Challenge has been taken up in other states around the country, and even as far away as Australia!

**ELECTRIC SCOOTERS**

Last year, San Francisco began following the example of its East Coast counterparts. Scoot Networks, a local start-up, started offering self-service electric scooters to the public. For 3 USD a ride, customers are provided with a helmet and insurance and get an initial training session with a coach. Everything is done by smartphone, from starting the scooter to measuring the scooter's battery life. And the phone can also be used as a GPS!

**MAKING THE CAR OBSOLETE WITHIN SIX YEARS**

In an effort to reduce its CO2 emissions by 40% by 2020 (in comparison with 1990 levels), the city of Hamburg plans to make the car obsolete. How? By connecting green spaces and parks with pedestrian and cycling paths. In six years, if all goes well, getting around by walking, biking or using public transit should be so simple that the residents of Hamburg will no longer even think about taking their cars!

**WALKABLE STREETS**

How walkable is your street? Is your street quiet, are the sidewalks and crosswalks safe, is the incline just right, and are the buildings or houses along the street full of charm? If your answer is yes, then your street probably scores high on the walkability scale, which is calculated using algorithms based on the information provided by pedestrians. Using the Walkonomics site, the public can find out the walkability of the 700,000 streets in England, the United States and Canada already in the system.

44 That's the number of U.S. cities with a self-service bike system, with a further 28 cities planning to offer this type of service to residents. In Canada, four cities offer this service, with Vancouver soon to make it five.

**MAP OF THE WORLD SHOWING EXAMPLES OF GOOD IDEAS FROM AROUND THE WORLD**
Share your initiatives and make them known in this letter.
Do not hesitate to contact:

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