

Conversations

Quarterly review
N°1 — 2021

for tomorrow

Article by
Bertrand Piccard,
Initiator and Chairman
of the Solar Impulse
Foundation

#GetTheFutureYouWant



Bertrand Piccard

Initiator and Chairman of the
Solar Impulse Foundation

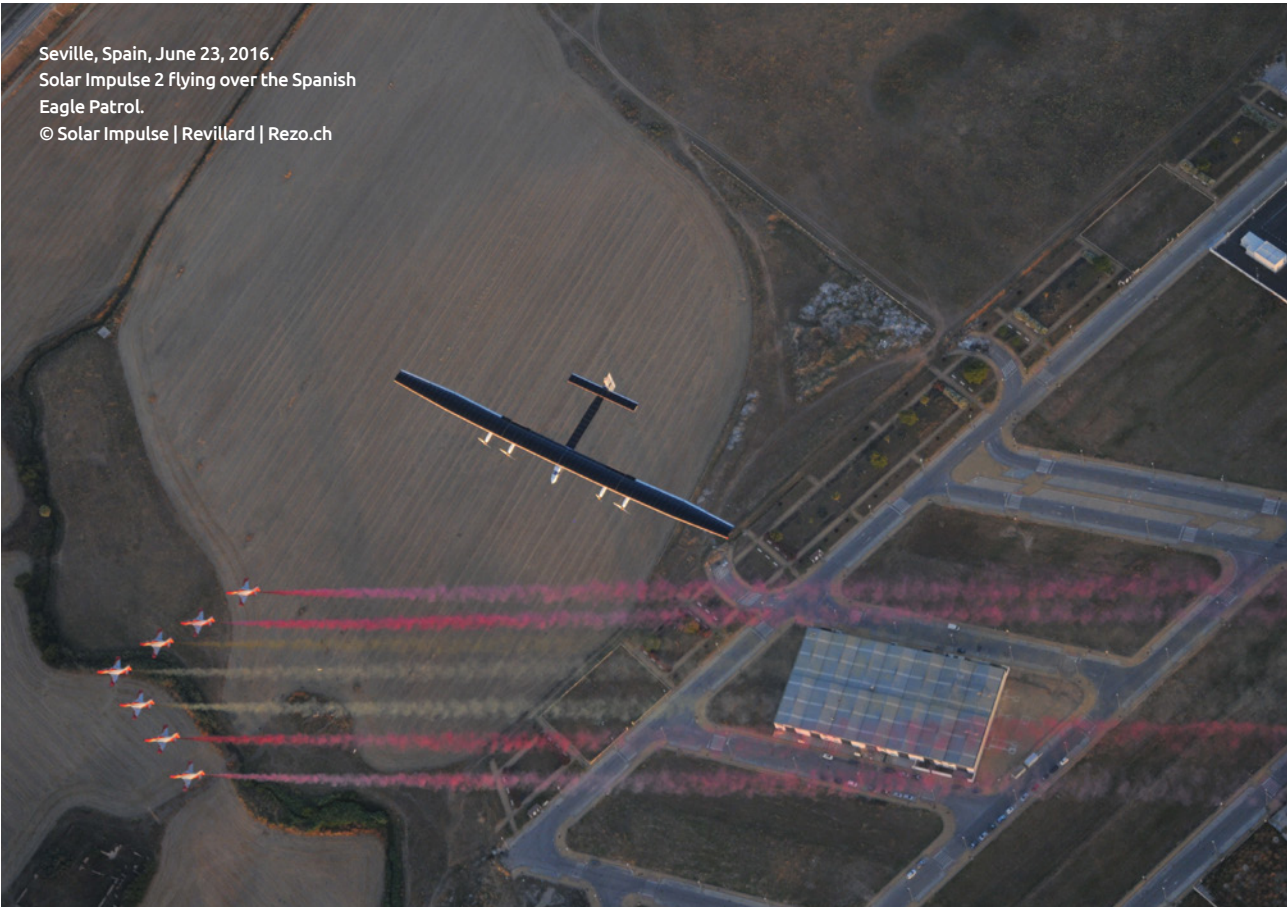
BUSINESS LEADERS, IT'S YOUR TURN TO BECOME THE EXPLORERS OF TOMORROW!

Bertrand Piccard – serial explorer, psychiatrist, United Nations goodwill ambassador,¹ Initiator and Chairman of the Solar Impulse Foundation – comes from a long line of scientific explorers. His grandfather, Auguste Piccard, was the first person to reach the stratosphere by balloon. Bertrand's father, Jacques Piccard, was the first to descend to the deepest part of the ocean, the Challenger Deep in the Mariana Trench, along with US Navy Lieutenant Don Walsh. Bertrand himself made history with the first non-stop, round-the-world balloon flight in 1999. Then, in 2016, he circumnavigated the globe in the "Solar Impulse 2" – a solar-powered airplane – with the aim of demonstrating the immense potential of renewable energies. Following the success of the flight, Bertrand founded the Solar Impulse Foundation with the aim of selecting 1,000 solutions that can protect the environment in a profitable way.² The solutions act as practical tools to help decision-makers adopt more ambitious energy policies and achieve their environmental targets. Bertrand is also the founder of the World Alliance for Efficient Solutions, which was set up with the goal of bringing together actors in the field of clean technologies. By 2019, its members included more than 2,000 startups, corporations, investors, and public authorities.

¹ UN Environment Programme. (n.d.) *Bertrand Piccard*. Retrieved from www.unenvironment.org/people/bertrand-piccard.

² Solar Impulse Foundation. (n.d.) *Exploring Efficient Solutions*. Retrieved from <https://solarimpulse.com/efficient-solutions>.

Seville, Spain, June 23, 2016.
Solar Impulse 2 flying over the Spanish
Eagle Patrol.
© Solar Impulse | Revillard | Rezo.ch



Roald Amundsen, the Wright brothers, Charles Lindbergh, Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay, Neil Armstrong, my grandfather Auguste Piccard, and my father Jacques Piccard ... what do all these names have in common and stand for? They are associated with some of the most pioneering events of the 20th century. These explorers pushed the limits of what was possible in order to discover the ends of the Earth, ocean and space. They showed the importance of the pioneering spirit in deepening our knowledge of the world and advancing humanity.

Today, we are aware of the complexity and beauty of the Earth, but also of its fragility. This is why our challenge is no longer the discovery of new territories, but the exploration of new ways of thinking and doing. This will be critical if we are to build a model where societal prosperity grows in balance with Nature, allowing us to tackle inequalities and build broad-based prosperity for all. I am convinced that the new explorers of the 21st century will be business leaders and captains of industry, collaborating with

politicians and civic society to build a new model of sustainable growth, tackling our most critical environmental and social issues.

What the world needs now is bold corporate leaders, rather than managers, who are ready to step outside their comfort zone and make radical decisions in order to put their business strategy at the service of the general interest, by fighting climate change and reducing inequality. It's encouraging to see that more and more leaders are now making commitments on these issues and taking action. Last year, the number of corporations that committed to reaching net zero carbon emissions by 2050 more than doubled, including major players such as BP or Nestlé. Others, such as Microsoft, have gone further by declaring that they would become carbon-negative, meaning they will reduce CO₂ in the atmosphere.

Last June, I gathered 12 corporate partners of the Solar Impulse Foundation, from LVMH to BNP Paribas. They signed a commitment to implement concrete actions to ensure a clean recovery of the global economy and also called on governments for more

Businesses can drive this step change

OVER
170

business and investor CEOs urged the EU to raise its 2030 greenhouse gas emissions reduction to at least 55%

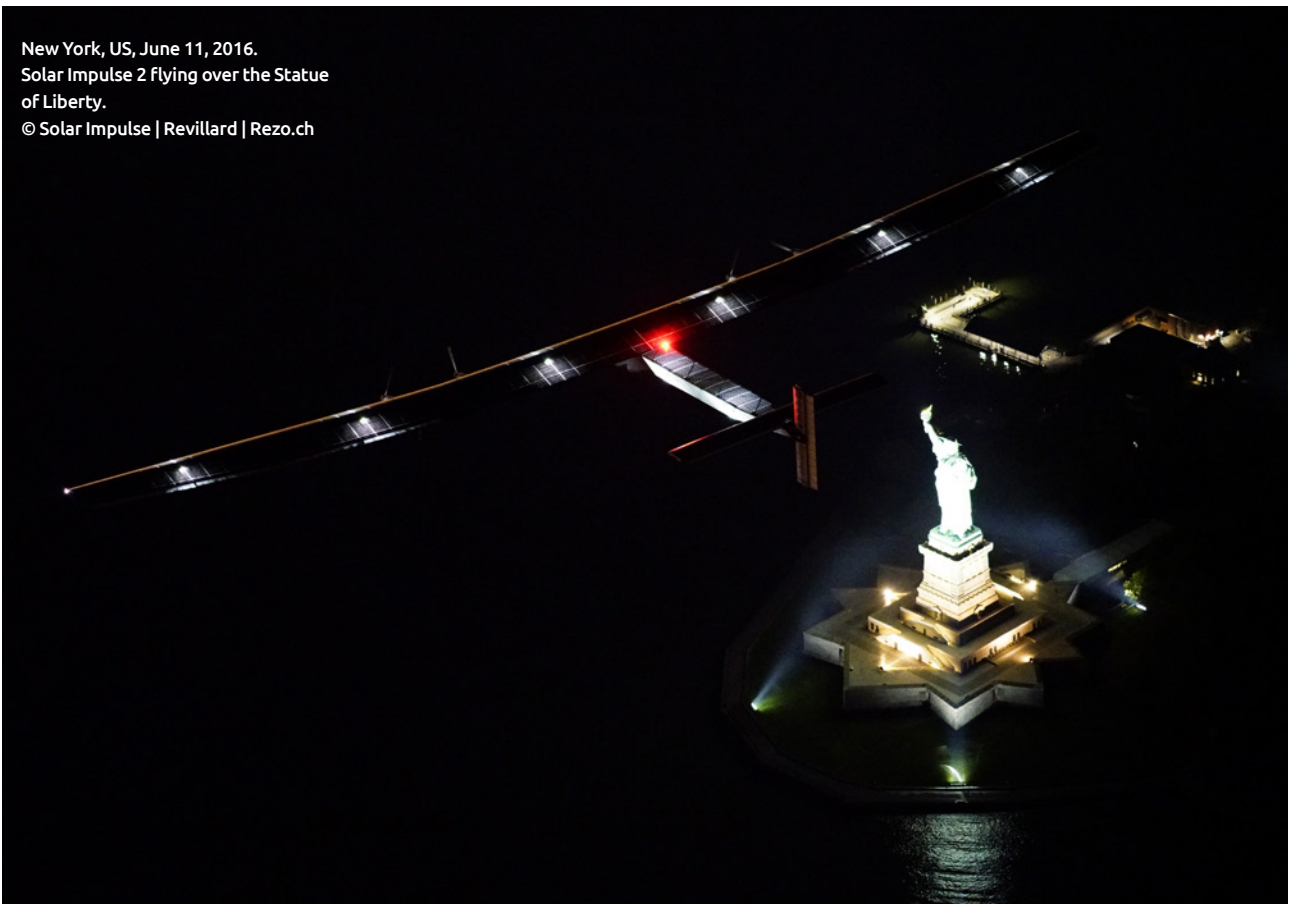
“

Others, such as Microsoft, have gone further by declaring that they would become carbon-negative – they will reduce CO₂ in the atmosphere.

ambitious environmental policies. Many corporations have made similar commitments in recent weeks, and coalitions of responsible companies are emerging in the food, chemical, transport, and fashion industries in particular. A few months ago, over 170 business and investor CEOs urged the EU to raise its 2030 greenhouse gas emissions reduction targets to at least 55 percent. These developments point to increasing recognition among business leaders that protecting the environment, and putting sustainability at the heart of their strategy, are critical to driving societal impact and long-term value for all their stakeholders, from their investors to the communities they operate in.

Thanks to innovative clean technologies, companies can reap significant financial benefits while reducing their negative environmental impact. This is in line with the work I initiated through the Solar Impulse Foundation and its labelling system for clean and

New York, US, June 11, 2016.
Solar Impulse 2 flying over the Statue
of Liberty.
© Solar Impulse | Revillard | Rezo.ch



March 1, 1999. Breitling Orbiter 3
and its pilots – Bertrand Piccard and Brian Jones
– flying over the Swiss Alps after taking off
on their round-the-world effort.
© Piccard Family



profitable solutions.³ We have spent the past three years selecting and labelling technological solutions that protect the environment in a financially profitable way. These solutions allow companies to unlock new business opportunities, reduce energy and water consumption and cut back on waste, set up circular economy processes, and use resources more efficiently. Some examples of solutions that have received the Solar Impulse Efficient Solution label include:

- “Plasma Vortex” – a non-chemical-based, environmentally friendly, and cost-effective industrial wastewater decontamination system. The system reduces the energy required to treat hazardous wastewater by 97% and delivers a payback in under 2 years.⁴
- “SPEED” – a solution for energy-efficient Application-Specific Integrated Circuit (ASIC) design that delivers significant energy savings for IoT devices, while reducing time-to-market for chip

³ Solar Impulse Foundation. (n.d.) *Efficient Solution Label*. Retrieved from <https://solarimpulse.com/label>.

⁴ Solar Impulse Foundation. (n.d.) *Plasma Vortex*. Retrieved from <https://solarimpulse.com/efficient-solutions/plasma-vortex>.



“It’s not easy to change the practices of an economic system through the will of a few individuals. But when one business leader shows that protecting the environment has become more profitable than destroying it, they clear the path for others to follow suit.”



Cairo, Egypt, July 13, 2016.
Solar Impulse 2 flying over the Pyramids.
© Solar Impulse | Jean Revillard | Rezo.ch

makers from a few months to a few weeks.⁵

- “KEYOU-inside” – a solution that allows fossil fuel-based internal combustion engines to be redesigned to run on hydrogen from renewable sources. The solution enables OEMs to integrate zero-emission vehicles into their portfolio within a short time frame and offers a 40-80% lower Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) compared to other zero-emission solutions.⁶
- “ecoBirdy” – ecoBirdy is an award-winning company that has developed a technology to transform plastic waste into high-grade raw material that can replace virgin plastic. The production process enables low energy upcycling of products without the use of any non-renewable resources.⁷

Embracing innovations like these to build sustainable businesses will be key to the continued relevance and success of corporations. The young people who demonstrate and strike for the climate today are the talents of tomorrow and will only look to join companies who share their values. Consumer behavior, too, is increasingly shaped by sustainable values. Employees and customers will avoid those who are perceived to endanger the future of humankind.

Of course, it is not easy to change the practices of an economic system through the will of a few individuals. But when one business leader shows that protecting the environment has become more profitable than destroying it, they clear the path for others to follow suit. Following Edmund Hillary and Tensing Norgay’s first ascent of Everest in 1953, nearly 4,000 people have managed to reach the ‘roof of the world’. And today I appeal to the pioneering spirit of business leaders to also embark on a major journey and become the new explorers of the 21st century! •

⁵ Solar Impulse Foundation. (n.d.) *SPEED*. Retrieved from <https://solarimpulse.com/efficient-solutions/speed>.

⁶ Solar Impulse Foundation. (n.d.) *KEYOU-inside*. Retrieved from <https://solarimpulse.com/efficient-solutions/keyou-inside>.

⁷ Solar Impulse Foundation. (n.d.) *ecoBirdy*. Retrieved from <https://solarimpulse.com/efficient-solutions/ecobirdy>.

To hear from more global leaders, read the full edition of Conversations for Tomorrow –
<https://www.capgemini.com/research/conversations-for-tomorrow-edition-1/>