

Dr. Robert W. Corell

Yesterday's opening session was a remarkable session indeed. It was filled with really unique insights and certainly provocative ideas. At the beginning of that session, we were asked to look at the following statement: "In 25 years will the world find itself in an irreversible trajectory towards continued environmental destruction, massive inequality, social unrest, and insecurity? What will it take in the way of political will and popular power to prompt to the policy shifts that can make for a better, more humane world?"

I think the answer to that has evolved over our discussions, but let me focus on what happened during the opening session yesterday. We had six very insightful opening presentations that not only set the stage for the rest of this conference, but provided for all of us stimulating and thoughtful and provocative insights that carried to discussions over coffee, dinner, and a late night drink. There was a consistent theme throughout the entire session, a theme that surfaced over and over again. In short, it was the powerful consequences of choices. Choices made and choices not made. Manfred (Max-Neef) said we are today the product of our choices and as well the product of the choices we did not make. He posited a world in the future will also be a product of the many such choices facing us over time. But there will be behind that, non-choices that may in fact have been better roads to travel. I found it remarkable in this simple and maybe seemingly obvious statement, that it is not always clear that we really do understand adequately the consequences of the setting in which choices are made. During analysis of the choices we often make, we convince ourselves that we're thoughtful, rational, comprehensive but also, we very rarely give that depth of thought to the non-choices we leave behind. I fear, as Yogi Berra, a baseball hero in the United States and often quoted: "When you come to a fork in a road, take it." Is that what we do too often? As Manfred admonished us—do we understand those roads not taken? And the consequences of the non-choices that we left behind?

This business of choices, in my view, dominated the discussion and I counted the many, many times that the word choice or alternative found its way in virtually every presentation. Tom Schelling outlined a series of profoundly important choices made through history of our nuclear age—a litany of non-choices that were made that otherwise would have led humanity to tragedy. He properly noted that a nuclear accident in itself would not cause a nuclear retaliation, but it would be the choices of world leaders that would have the consequence of such an accident. His insights, paragraph after paragraph, gave reality to Manfred's epistemology of what I can the choice non-choice dichotomy. Helmut Reisen and Lidia Brito then gave a tour de force of economic analyses and various frameworks for making choices with Lidia suggesting there is a cascade of inter-connected choices that go from effective leadership, to broad-based ownership, to convictions of the purposes we seek to follow, and a commitment to superordinate goals. And to relearning the human experience and human capacity and place that, all in an ethical foundation, that frames our future. Jiang Zhenhua shared with candor many of the past present and those choices that come to China, and Jorma Ollila brought focus to the tough choices facing the oil and gas industry in the light of the

challenges of a changing climate and the demands of a sustainable and equitable future for the planet.

Others like Khotso Mokhele yesterday noted the dichotomy in framing Africa's current situation with a massive scale of choices of the pace set the foundation for the constraint of Africa's tomorrow. And then last night, Jan Pronk talked about the realities in his framing of development as conflict. The challenge he noted, maybe not quite so explicitly, was that the choices steer towards constructive resolution in some cases but in others steer us toward destructive futures. It is really all about choices that we heard throughout our morning session. Mr. Chair, the central theme of the opening session really was about choices, and the consequence of inadequate recognition of the non-choices that frame humanity's past and current situation. One could argue, I think, that our future about choices and about the realities that such choices are nested and nurtured in a much wider range of non-choices. Thank you very much.