



Action, not words

At the end of the Forum, a panel of renowned experts discussed the issues treated in the workshops and presentations – and drew some initial conclusions. The panel comprised Yolanda Kakabadse (Ecuador), Takako Tajima (USA), Aziza Chaouni (Morocco), Ashok Lall (India), Arab Hoballah (France), Enrique Norton (Mexico), and moderator Rolf Soiron (Switzerland).



Moderator Rolf Soiron (Switzerland) is Chairman of the Board of Directors of Holcim Ltd and Chairman of the Advisory Board of the Holcim Foundation.

“How can we bring the planet into a condition of sustainability, a condition which clearly does not exist today?” **Rolf Soiron** submitted this general problem to the assembly – and directed an explicit question to the panel: “In everything that we’ve heard these last three days, is there a common denominator, or consensus, or elements, which can serve as a basis for future development?”



Yolanda Kakabadse, representing social and environmental interests, pointed out the importance of choosing the right people for positions of responsibility: “One person at the top can make a tremendous change.” Additionally, it is vital to keep the context in view, “because not every solution works in every situation.” Takako Tajima agreed: “In construction, one must also consider deconstruction – and understand it as a part of the building lifecycle, not as an act of destruction.” She framed demolition in a broader context: “It can be a question of buildings, obstacles, or preconceived notions.”

The concluding panel experts of the Holcim Forum (from left): Enrique Norten, Takako Tajima, Aziza Chaouni, Rolf Soiron, Yolanda Kakabadse, Arab Hoballah and Ashok B. Lall.



“One person at the top can make a tremendous change.”

Yolanda Kakabadse (Ecuador) is President of WWF International, Senior Advisor of the Fundación Futuro Latinoamericano, and Member of the Advisory Board of the Holcim Foundation.

Ashok B. Lall referred to the presentation of Amory Lovins (page 8), who showed many innovations that are now receiving international support. “From Jeremy Rifkin (page 14) I am taking home cultural and social optimism founded on human empathy. Werner Sobek (page 26) discussed two important aspects of sustainability: the environment and energy.” Although many points were discussed, Lall felt something was lacking: “We have largely left aside the political, commercial, and socioeconomic aspects that could lead us to sustainability.” Nevertheless, the interplay of knowledge, awareness, determination, and motivation evidenced at the Forum was for Lall a clear sign that “nothing will happen without cooperation among all fields.”

“Will, motivation, awareness, knowledge – all seem to be interlinked.”



Ashok B. Lall (India) is Founder and Principal of Ashok B Lall Architects, based in New Delhi; he was a Member of the Asia Pacific and Global juries of the Holcim Awards competition 2005/06 and Head of the Asia Pacific jury for the Holcim Awards competition 2008.

Arab Hoballah expressed a critical view of the presentations, saying that good ideas and projects were presented, but the open question always remained: “And what now? How can we implement all this?” We know virtually everything we need to know, but “we cannot manage to act in one accord. We must bring the important people to one table and achieve agreement on real measures. We should not wait until we gain

more knowledge – we should finally take action.” Also, a sort of global benchmark system is needed which can serve as a basis for the individual solutions of each country.



“We know almost everything that we want to know. Now we need to act – but we mustn’t act individually.”

Arab Hoballah (France) is Chief of the Sustainable Consumption and Production Branch of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).

Aziza Chaouni agreed that many possibilities are available, but few solutions. She thinks that this has something to do with the term “sustainability,” which has not yet been adequately defined. This goes so far that young architects like Michel Rojkind (page 32) show a certain reluctance to use the term. “We know that we must translate sustainability into action, but we don’t yet know what this means for each country.”

“There has been a growing suspicion about the term ‘sustainability.’ We all know that we have to engage in it, but the term has been abused and is not well defined.”

Aziza Chaouni (Morocco) is Co-Founder and Principal of Bureau EAST, with offices in Morocco, Canada, and the USA; together with Takako Tajima (page 69) she represented the team that won the Global Holcim Award Gold 2009.



What disturbed **Enrique Norten** the most was that the entire discussion of sustainability was limited to negative concepts. “Everything we discussed is based on reduction, zero, less material, reduction, and more reduction. After 20 years of hearing this talk, I am tired of it.” He misses the positive side, the sign that something additional must come – “Inventiveness. Because invention represents not reduction, but vision.” But instead of that, we continually repeat ourselves – even though the title of the conference is visionary. “But when it comes to drawing the final conclusions, I see no vision.”

“It’s always about reduction and reduction and reduction. And after hearing this for 20 years, I think we are totally tired of it.”



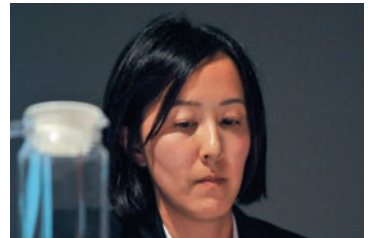
Enrique Norten (Mexico) is an Alumnus of Universidad Iberoamericana, Principal and Founder of TEN Arquitectos, with offices in New York and Mexico City, and Member of the Advisory Board of the Holcim Foundation.

Ashok B. Lall disagreed, finding that inventions and positive concepts are definitely at hand. Nevertheless, the real challenge that remains is to decide how and where to apply these concepts. “One must, for example, adapt the visions to the fact that our increasing population requires increasingly more resources to meet its basic needs.” Innovation could also widen the gap between rich and poor. “But do we have time to wait for a consensus when problems are lurking everywhere?”

Takako Tajima, defended her view as entirely positive. Deconstruction is just as important as construction, because it creates room for the new: “demolition leads to building.” For Yolanda Kakabadse the question of responsibility is a topical issue. “We always talk about our responsibility for our grandchildren, but this mindset of thinking in terms of the next 50 years has led us in the completely wrong direction. We always find excuses that we need more knowledge or research – but what we really need is immediate decisions.”

“Deconstruction has to be seen not as something counterproductive, but as something productive and positive.”

Takako Tajima (USA) is Co-Founder and Principal of Bureau EAST.



Yolanda Kakabadse and Arab Hoballah agreed on the complex issue of consumption: you can't lump together a rich American with a poor Nepalese. “But you can talk about sustainability with each of them, when you place the subject in the right context,” said Hoballah. Context is a critical aspect of every complex issue. That includes the building sector, and that's why sustainable construction is a task not only of architects and engineers, but also of mayors and presidents. It also always depends on wanting to see the positive, again touching on the issue of a negative mindset. Enrique Norten picked up this thread and called for a redefinition of the words “beauty” and “aesthetics” in terms that apply for everyone. “That would change our view of the world and answer the question of what kind of world we want to live in – and how this world should look in the future!”