



## INTERNATIONAL POLLS OF SUSTAINABILITY EXPERTS AND THE PUBLIC EMPHASIZE GROWING NEED FOR PRIVATE SECTOR LEADERSHIP ON SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

### 8 in 10 experts fear that governments will not take action short of catastrophe

**LONDON, UK (6 JUNE 2012)** – As world leaders prepare to gather at the G20 and Rio+20 conferences later this month, two major global surveys released today by GlobeScan and SustainAbility find that expert and public confidence in national governments when it comes to governments' ability to tackle global economic, environmental and social challenges are at severe lows. The findings suggest national governments will not take action unprompted - and that business has a unique ability to play a greater role in addressing sustainable development. Nearly eight in ten (77%) sustainability experts think a major catastrophe will need to occur for national governments to take action, and 68% identify a lack of political will as the greatest obstacle to making further progress on sustainable development.

The surveys are part of a series of initiatives by [The Regeneration Project](#) in the lead up to Rio+20, a cross-sectoral collaboration that aims to accelerate progress in the transition to sustainable development. The findings are derived from an expert survey of 1,603 sustainability experts across corporate, government, NGO, and academic sectors in 117 countries and a public opinion survey of over 24,000 people in 23 countries.

The role of business in spurring government action on sustainability will be crucial. "Working with governments to establish a regulatory environment that supports sustainable development" (33%) is the second most frequent response among experts asked how the private sector can best contribute to sustainable development, after contributing technology and innovation (41%). Government experts are even more likely to highlight the need for business to collaborate with government (42%).

"The surveys make it clear that society has greater expectations for business than it did [at Rio] in 1992," said Dr. Rainer Feurer, Senior Vice President Corporate Strategy, Planning and Environment at BMW Group, a presenting sponsor of The Regeneration Project. "We think that those who see this as an opportunity rather than as a challenge will prevail in the long run. This is why the BMW Group strategically focuses on sustainable mobility solutions."

"Based on The Regeneration Project's recent poll data, it's clear that there is much to do as we look ahead in terms of sustainability leadership," said Kelly M. Semrau, Chief Sustainability Officer at SC Johnson, also a presenting sponsor of The Regeneration Project. "SC Johnson believes that we all have a role to play, from public and private sector, and we're going to need to work together to set clear goals, priorities and action plans."

"We find ourselves in a very challenging dynamic," said Chris Coulter, President of GlobeScan. "Both the global public and experts have low expectations for governments to provide the necessary leadership to move us toward a sustainable footing, yet we need governments engaged to make progress quickly. It likely falls on business to not only continue to transform the economy but also cajole governments into action."

Mark Lee, Executive Director of SustainAbility, comments: "Our polls underscore the gravity of the sustainable development challenge and make it clear that business can contribute by supporting policy that accelerates sustainability progress, sharing technology and improving its own performance – actions which will close the trust gap faced by business regarding its own performance record."

#### Additional findings from the surveys:

**A sense of system breakdown:** Nearly eight in ten (78%) sustainability experts believe the current economic system must be substantially overhauled and a similar percentage (77%) say that major catastrophes will need to occur before governments will act on sustainability.

**New and collaborative models of leadership are key, including social movements and cross-sector partnerships - but government must be involved:** Asked to rate the contribution of major societal actors on sustainability since the 1992 Earth Summit, 33% of experts rated the contribution of multi-sector partnerships to sustainable development since the 1992 Earth Summit as “good” or “excellent” - far higher than either government or business alone.

**Failing grades on society’s progress since the first Rio Earth Summit in 1992:** A matter of weeks before the Rio+20 Earth Summit, fewer than half of the 24,000 citizens surveyed believe that society has become better at protecting the environment, improving economic wellbeing, and creating healthier and more equitable societies. Experts share this view for the most part, but were even more negative on health and equity.

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**For more information, please contact:**

- Kai Zobebein, Sustainability Spokesperson, BMW, +49 89 382 21170, [kai.zobebein@bmw.de](mailto:kai.zobebein@bmw.de)
- Jam Stewart, Director Global Public Affairs, SC Johnson, +1 262 260 2440, [jmstewar@scj.com](mailto:jmstewar@scj.com)
- Oliver Martin , Director Global Development, GlobeScan, +1 416 721 3544, [oliver.martin@globescan.com](mailto:oliver.martin@globescan.com)
- Dr. Geoff Kendall, Development Director, SustainAbility, +44 (0)20 7269 6922, [geoff.kendall@sustainability.com](mailto:geoff.kendall@sustainability.com)

**NOTES FOR EDITORS**

**Methodology for the Survey of Sustainability Experts**

The findings are drawn from a GlobeScan / SustainAbility survey of sustainability experts across corporate, government, NGO, academic, research, and service / media organizations in 117 countries. From mid-April to mid-May 2012, a total of 1,603 experts were surveyed online by GlobeScan, SustainAbility and *The Regeneration Project* partners—ICMM, UNEP, Civicus, WBCSD, World Bank, CCSR, and GLOBE. Participants comprise a highly-experienced respondent pool: 58 percent have more than ten years of experience working on sustainability issues; 31 percent have five to ten years of experience; 12 percent have three to four years of experience.

**Methodology for the Global Public Opinion Survey**

Representative samples of approximately 1,000 adults per country in 23 countries (n=24,441) were interviewed face-to-face or by telephone between December 2011 and February 2012. Questions were rated by half samples in all countries. Polling was conducted by GlobeScan and its research partners in each country. In Brazil, China, Indonesia, Kenya, and Turkey, urban samples were used. The margin of error per country ranges from +/- 2.9 to 4.9 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

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**About The Regeneration Project**

The Regeneration Project is a collaborative and multi-faceted initiative by GlobeScan and SustainAbility that aims to provide a roadmap for achieving sustainable development within the next generation, focusing in particular on ways the private sector can improve sustainable development strategy, increase credibility and deliver results at greater speed and scale. The project is presented by BMW Group and SC Johnson and sponsored by DuPont, Interface, Pfizer and Cisco, and supported by many other partners. For more information and a complete list of supporters, visit [www.TheRegenerationProject.com](http://www.TheRegenerationProject.com)

**About GlobeScan:**

For 25 years, GlobeScan has helped clients measure and build value-generating relationships with their stakeholders. Uniquely placed at the nexus of reputation, brand and sustainability, we partner with clients to build trust, drive engagement and inspire innovation within, around and beyond their organizations. For more information, visit [www.GlobeScan.com](http://www.GlobeScan.com)

**About SustainAbility:**

SustainAbility is a think-tank and strategic advisory firm working to inspire transformative business leadership on the sustainability agenda. Established in 1987, SustainAbility delivers illuminating foresight and actionable insight on sustainable development trends and issues.

For more information, visit [www.SustainAbility.com](http://www.SustainAbility.com)