



Dear Petra,

Congratulations to be a member of the Club of Rome!

The first report of the Club of Rome was the famous The limits to growth, brought out in 1972 by Dennis and Donella Meadows, Jorgen Randers and William W. Behrens III. It was published in a tumultuous time and caused a great sensation announcing that the earth is finite and resources as well as capabilities are being pushed ever closer to their limits. All over the world we are using more resources than the Earth can provide in the form of biodiversity decline, limited access to clean and safe drinking water, or food security. The resources become progressively more expensive and end up in mass migrations, conflicts and wars.

**To prevent this disaster, a collective commitment is needed. As a member of the Club of Rome you are one of world leaders that raise awareness on the crucial global issues of the future. You have just returned from a European meeting of the Club of Rome in Winterthur - thinking about the first report, what has changed since then and the fact that we need to act as humankind within the planetary boundaries, where do you think we are now in terms of collaboration and collective leadership?**

I think we are at a crossroad. The various scenarios for the future of our world may differ in content and details, but they have one thing in common – we can't continue doing business as usual. This means we can't afford to ignore that climate change will have an effect on the economy which will have an effect on people and social unrest, and so on. The warning is there, but I believe there is also a potential that is so far untapped. The challenges are complex and there is no simple answer to a complex challenge. In fact, it is clear that the answers also need to be complex. They need to take structural changes into account, use our technological connectedness, but also build on already existing human insight and tap into collective intelligence. It is clear that solutions to the challenges of the future cannot be found in isolation or in silo approaches. We need to more consciously create space for collaborative efforts – across private sector, public sector and civil society, between the generations, between advanced and emerging countries. If there is one thing humankind needs to learn is how to enhance the capacity of a collective to drive change for a sustainable future. This is the cornerstone for shifting systems towards resilience and a more livable future.

**How can the Club of Rome help shift the system towards more sustainability?**

First, I think it is important that the Club of Rome gains its strong voice and influence back. It is an extraordinary group of experts that might not always agree, but shares not only the concern for a better future, but also suggestions and solutions, how to get there. I personally would love to bring in my collaboration and



Petra Kuenkel and Graeme Maxton, Secretary General of The Club of Rome, at the club's European-based Members Meeting in Winterthur, Switzerland, 28 April 2015

process competence to help drive the agenda of the Club of Rome and build collaboration ecosystems around the future possibilities. This could mean e.g. towards a different way of resource utilization and a fundamental change in the economic system so that the economy actually serves humankind as a whole. Moreover, I am referring to an adaptation to climate change that is driven by innovation, and social and ecologic responsibility. Of course, this requires a scaling-up of skills in navigating complex change at a global level.

### **How can we navigate complex change in multi-stakeholder collaboration?**

Sustainability challenges reveal similar features – complexity, interdependence and urgency. Ending poverty, addressing climate change, tackling civil and cross-border war, ensuring food security, meeting health challenges, and dealing with environmental degradation – require well-functioning collaboration among a wide range of stakeholders with different interests, viewpoints and competences. In this future, leadership must be seen as the capacity of a collective to catalyse and implement positive change for the common good. Leaders become conscious nodes in a deliberate network for change. The answer to complexity is not simplification, but a complex, yet ordered approach that allows for a maximum degree of self-organisation. The answer to interdependence is a networked approach to action and reflection. The answer to urgency is tapping into the potential of the human heart that is nourished by stories of possibilities. All three answers not only require checks and balances to prevent any action going astray, they also need to be built on human competences. We need to build Collaboration Ecosystems that deliver results.

### **Moving on to Collaboration Ecosystems, what changes in this field do you expect to see in the future?**

We need to understand how change competence of human collaboration systems develops and we need much more research into this. A sustainable future is a global learning journey - no single actor has the once and for all solution. It is a journey that we actually can't step away from because we are all part of it. Whether we consciously decide to be part of it or not - we are in it. So it makes much more sense to decide to join that global learning journey in a more conscious way. We need to model evolution. As humankind we can make this process just a little more conscious. There is a vast amount of knowledge on sustainability already there that needs to be brought out, that needs to be pulled together and implemented in a collaborative approach. We need to learn iteratively as we make progress. That is why the future of leadership is collective. It is the willingness and the commitment to change towards sustainability as we go along, in our area of expertise, in our competence, in our capabilities.

Thank you for the interview!