

Speaker 1: The urgent need to first to tackle the climate crisis.

Jens Nielsen: Yes. So it's really a crucial decade.

Speaker 1: Impacts of climate change and the risks that these pose to our society.

Jens Nielsen: We need specific plans and excellence to drive CO2. In instance, down in the short term.

Speaker 1: The climate crisis is the world's most critical challenge right now.

Zoe Haseman: Hello and welcome to the Sparks Podcast series. I'm Zoe Haseman.

Jens Nielsen: And I'm Jens Nielsen.

Zoe Haseman: And we'll be your host throughout the special edition podcast series brought to you by the World Climate Foundation and Jacobs. Come with us as we take you on a journey around the world to explore how different countries are tackling their climate challenges. Sparking ideas, and inspiration.

From clean energy innovations in Scotland, to sustainable buildings in Dubai, we'll be interviewing global green leaders, financiers, and entrepreneurs about the policies, investments, and innovations that are accelerating our progress towards a resilient and sustainable world. Our podcast hopes to educate and inspire, sparking real conversations with the intention to Collaborate. Act. Commit to real change.

Speaker 4: We're excited to be coming to live today for this basically this sparks podcast at work on summit, which the past 11 years has been leading business and investment driven solutions to climate change at each cup. And to commemorate this landmark applications.

Top 26 is the first cup to take place after the Paris Agreements measures take effect, and the first opportunity since then foundations to come together to review commitments and strengthen ambition.

Speaker 5: We're now in week two of COP26, and it's exciting to see progress is already being made. The first major outcome of COP26 is the news that more than a hundred countries will sign a deforestation pledge to stop deforestation by 2030. These signatures represent 85% of the world's forest.

And most critically includes Brazil. The main home of the earth's greatest carbon sink. The Amazon great in forest COP26 is the time and place for us as a business and residents of this beautiful, vibrant, fragile planet to do everything we can to demand and drive the positive actions that will address our climate and biodiversity crisis.

And helping us continue this important conversation today is our fantastic guest who is live with us here today at COP26. And we delighted you to welcome Jennifer Lenhart global cities lead with WWF. Hi Jennifer.

Jennifer Lenhar...: Hello. It's a great pleasure to be here with you.

Speaker 5: Thank you for joining us.

Jennifer Lenhar...: Thank you.

Speaker 4: Hi, Jennifer. Could you provide us with a short introduction on your role, reason for being here in a brief synopsis of how that relates to this year's key issues at COP and what's at stake.

Jennifer Lenhar...: Yes. Well, firstly, it's a great pleasure to be here. So thank you so much. My name is Jennifer Lenhardt and I am the global lead for cities at WWF. And why cities? Why is cities important to this COP, and the wider climate agenda. Well, cities are responsible for roughly 70% of carbon emissions and they're home to 55% of global population.

And they're also key in order for really going to get the investment in innovation opportunities that are possible. Cities will perform as the test beds. We need them to be. So when it comes to the UN climate conference, COP26 cities and the wider non-state actor agenda.

So that's the role of cities, businesses, investors, universities, youth are making a stronger and stronger push. So we see that this is really a positive momentum to build these collaborations, across these non-state actors to really encourage national governments to take stronger commitments. So, that is what I'm doing here today.

Speaker 5: Fantastic. And in the context of being here at COP26, then this important event for leading stakeholders to drive climate solutions, investments, and legislation. What are the most significant ways that you think we can scale up the action required from the public and private partnerships' perspective?

Jennifer Lenhar...: Excellent. And I will actually refer to some of the things that were going on yesterday at the world climate summit. Which had a big focus on collaboration, because the reality is we have the right solutions out there. We just need to learn how to connect the dots. Whether it's connecting cities that really want to take bold decisions with investors who want to see the potential of those solutions being enacted.

We need to bring public financing in together with private financing. And importantly, also we would say people. People are very important and I'd like to quote the executive director of UN habitat. We called it Public Private People partnerships. So that's a really important role for us as well.

So that I think that the collaboration aspect is essential. We often refer to cities as test bits for innovation, and that's great test something, see if it works, but if it does work. We need to scale it up from one individual neighborhood to one city, to multiple cities, and in order to do that effectively, we do need stronger investment.

So this is really where we see that there's a huge possibility, especially in a space focused on investment to really find those solutions, fund those solutions and see that there are multiple benefits to be had.

Speaker 4: Thank you. And from your own personal standpoint, as well as that from your organization. On our collective estimate is zero. And in this positive world, what are you pitching and committing to further advance climate biodiversity accent and [inaudible].

Jennifer Lenhar...: Well, that is a big question and I'm very happy to share or some answers with that for you. So on the nature positive side, I'll actually start with that because from WWS perspective, as one of the world's largest conservation organizations. We have been very pleased to see that the nature and climate agenda are coming closer and closer together, because this is definitely something that we want.

And we have been striving for before this climate conference. And certainly long after as well. Last year, connected to the human general assembly. We had something called The Leaders Pledge For Nature, and together we have seen 92 countries pledge for stronger nature commitments. And I actually have brought a little card here today.

So I'm happy to share it with you about nature positive by 2030. And what does this really mean? And what are the different roles of different actors, whether it's national governments, whether it's investors, whether it's cities, which is where I work a lot on. And so we really see that this is a key role nature and nature based solutions are hugely important.

When we talk about mitigation and we talk about adaptation and we talk about carbon sinks. So we do see that this is a hugely, hugely important role, and whether it's oceans or forests, or even nature based solutions in the urban environment. In terms of net zero and what are our ambitions within WWF, we have something called an expectations paper.

And a lot of ambitious ideas here, but I'm just going to roll through a few of them for you. Key for us is getting all hands on deck. And this connects to the whole idea of the non-state actor agenda. So it's not just what national governments are committing, but it's what all of us together can do. We also want to see leveraging of stronger climate plans and accelerated implementation.

So this is really about the NDCs or the nationally determined contributions. It's also about the national adaptation plan, and seeing that ambition is continuing to accelerate. We're pleasantly surprised with what we've seen here, but it's still not enough. So we do think that we're moving in the right direction, but knowing how urgent the science is and knowing what's at stake, we need to go faster and further and we need to do it together.

We also, when it comes to the actual negotiations. We need to fix the rule book, the rule book to understand how to actually implement the Paris Agreement. And what is there what kind of, we want five year common timeframes to review and make more ambitious NDCs. And we want to see that there is ample finance, especially for lower income countries to actually do what they are capable of doing.

They have the ambition, but they need the finance and connected to that. We can the role of loss and damage is so important. I've already said this, so I'm not going to go into it too much detail. But you to really understand the critical role of nature. So this has been very positive for us, but we need to continue to highlight as we go forward.

And then just yeah, seeing that the Paris Agreement is fit for purpose, and that is continuing to adapt because the realities that we're living in are adapting, as are the innovations that are coming out forward. So we need to see that what was agreed in Paris in 2015 and what will be coming here in Glasgow. And beyond that, it's continuing to build that momentum that we see that is possible.

Speaker 5: Absolutely. And Jennifer, we are just over the halfway point of COP26 now, and you've been here since the beginning and you've been to other COPS previously as well. What are you most excited about in terms of what the progress you've seen and heard in week one?

Jennifer Lenhar...: Absolutely. Well, I think we've seen a lot of successes. And I think we need to have that message out there because when you read the media or you can see what's happening on the streets. There's a lot of angst and sometimes even anger and rightfully so, because we're still not moving fast enough. But we've seen some very strong commitments in the last week.

And what we can actually say is in the scientist and some of the policy makers are starting to measure this, that before we came here, we were on a 2.7 degree celsius trajectory. And now with some of the commitments, we are actually closer to a 1.8 degree celsius trajectory. So that's hugely positive news, and that needs to be repeated.

But implementation. Implementation. Implementation, so we've seen that these promises have been out there and I'll just review a few. We had the Glasgow leaders declaration forest and land use signed by 133 countries to end

deforestation by 2030. We've seen the US and EU and several others agree to reduce methane by 30% by 2030.

We've seen commitments on finance, including John Kerry from the US delegation saying that we will finally make the a hundred billion pledge by next year. Hundred billion I should say, per year to support stronger climate action. And we've seen countries like Ecuador, Panama, Columbia, Costa Rica coming together, joining forces. So to protect collectively, their marine reserves.

Both for biodiversity, but also for climate actually important role the oceans play. That being said, if these are just pledges, but without implementation, they mean nothing. So we are moving in the right direction, but we need accountability. We need to scale up because we need to do this now. If we wait till 2030, if we wait till 2050, or even 2060.

That's too late, that's definitely too late for future generations, but it's also too late to really harness the opportunities that can come out of this climate action. So what do we still need? We definitely, we need to ramp up investments in renewable energy, but up to four to five times. Clean tech as well, three times. So I think this is a really great place to talk about clean tech investment.

This needs to be done. Great things are happening, but they need to be implemented those ideas that are out there. Let's get them going. Finance. We've seen some strong commitments from public finance. We need the private finance coming in there. We've seen some good hits on that and indications, but you know how to really find that, that strong collaboration.

And also of course, myself as a cities person, we want to see, we see ambitious mayors. I had the best conversation yesterday with the mayor. Well, today in Mexico. And he has ambition. He has ideas that he needs finance. He's ready to take bold decisions that might be unpopular, but to create a city of the future that is resilient, that is equitable. That is, has better air quality and better mobility solutions.

But we cities need this. So we need to help them become those testaments that they want to do to test out those innovations that are being talked about here. And we also need to think about education because where we are going in the world, if we don't get education right. How are our young people going to find hope, find leadership, find solutions.

So I think there's a lot of different things that are coming to stake here. But I would say that we are, I don't want to say optimistic, but I might say cautiously optimistic, but now our role is really to see that these pledges are implemented and scaled up so that we can really effectively meet those climate targets.

Speaker 5: Fantastic. And what do you see WWF's role being in that sort of next phase of implementation?

Jennifer Lenhar...: Yes.

Speaker 5: Like that really exciting example you just gave with the mayor of Monterey. Like-

Jennifer Lenhar...: Absolutely.

Speaker 5: ... how do you as a role, as a convene or perhaps like what comes next?

Jennifer Lenhar...: Definitely. I mean, convening is sort of our trademark. Our motto is Together Possible and we see that we're not going to get there unless we work together. So within WWF, we are located in about a hundred different countries. We work often very closely with national governments and investors and CDs on the ground. And then we work across our network.

So for example, myself as the global cities lead, I work with all of my different colleagues in order to know what they're talking to, the different cities that they're working with on the ground. And certainly we have colleagues working on finance with businesses trying to build that momentum. We have something called the Alliance Climate action, which is national alliances to demonstrate commitment on climate action in order to put that positive pressure on national governments.

To say, "Yes, we can take stronger commitments. It is possible." So, I think for us, and then to see all these commitments that were made in the last week of COP and that certainly this week is really about getting down to if a national leader can come and make a big pledge. Now the work starts on how is that actually going to be implemented.

So we have a big role to make sure that these pledges are accountable. They are transparent, that the data is there and that the financing, the financing is there. So that if these countries say they can do it. How are they going to pay for it and who is going to pay for it? So there's going to be a lot of conversation on that. And our role is to really push the momentum forward.

Speaker 5: Excellent.

Speaker 4: So in nutshell, what does a successful COP26 look like in your eyes?

Jennifer Lenhar...: Yeah. Well, I would say implementation, I think that's the first and final word I could say a lot more, but I think implementation. Implementation is key. And maybe if I could add one more, it's just getting that message out there. Because there are, there is strong momentum coming out of this.

But we need to make sure that is also communicated. And that it's scaled up because everything that we're seeing out in the streets to a hundred thousand

people marching on Saturday for the private March here in Glasgow, in the rain and the youth March to the day-

Speaker 5: It rains every day in Glasgow. So they have to do it rain or shine.

Jennifer Lenhar...: Exactly. So they were prepared, lots of rain jackets and umbrellas, the youth March the day before we're not doing enough, but we are moving in the direction. So let's say, okay, here are what we are doing. So we know what we can grasp on in order to continue climbing forward.

Speaker 4: Yeah. And how do we invest the next five 10 years?

Jennifer Lenhar...: Well for myself, and I think this I'm going to take down to the local level because 55% of us live in cities. I believe that number is going to be close to 70% in the next 10 or 15 years. The fastest growing cities are in Africa and Asia. So we need to make sure that investment, I can't remember the exact data right now, but so much of that infrastructure is yet to be built where all those people are moving into.

So let's get buildings right now. Let's get planning right now. Let's get energy systems right now. And when we do that, let's also talk about the pro benefits of climate action. If we get cities right. We're talking about less air pollution. Air pollution impacts 90% of people living in cities, 90%. I mean, it's so you see these images of a cloudy city somewhere.

I won't name a particular country, but it's all of us. We are all living this reality. So let's get transportation right. Whether it's electric cars as partly solution, but also active mobility, walking, cycling, connectivity, let's talk about nature based solutions in our cities streets for people in nature and not just cars. Connectivity in terms of energy systems.

Scaling so if you have an industrial system or even an office, how do we capture that heat in order to heat the local homes or setting a ice hockey rink next to a swimming pool so that we can see energy exchange, these solutions are happening now, but not at scale. And they're also affordable. We're talking about how do we save money and in order to rethink and revamp that investment elsewhere.

So if I see where do we go in five or 10 years? I would say our cleaner cities, cities with more diverse economies, cities that are walkable safe. Copenhagen is a perfect example of some of the things that have been done in that beautiful city that everybody loves. I spend five years living in Amsterdam. I fell in love with that city. Every single time I hopped on my bike.

And I think these are kind the places that people want to live, a place that is home. That feels also like the vacation and that by default, you're also taking smarter climate choices because that is the reality of where you're living. And

this shouldn't be just about Copenhagen or Amsterdam or Stockholm. This should be about multiple cities around the world.

I just moved back from Santiago to Chile, to Stockholm. And I'm very happy to say that I've seen more investment in local nature based solutions with climate resilient plants and exponential growth in cycling. Not enough yet, but in COVID even helped that to see really the expansion of places for people, new methods of mobility.

So these things are happening and they're growing at momentum. We're seeing at least in the cities that we're working with, a lot of countries in Latin America, where their cities are also saying, we need to reconnect to nature. Cities are, when we humans settled down, we settled down and the places that had the best soils.

The best access to water, because we needed to grow our food. We needed good places for shelter. So now we need to reconnect cities to their natural landscapes. And there is a lot of positive momentum. And there's certainly, as we look forward on technology and investment, we also need to learn from the past. And I think the synergy between that will be quite exciting.

Speaker 5:

Excellent. Thank you so much, Jennifer. We're going to have to leave it there, unfortunately. Because there's a lot more to do in here today at COP26. Thank you so much for joining us and sharing your expertise and experience. It's been an absolute pleasure to have you as our guest.

And we hope you enjoyed yourself here as well at the event and to all the wonderful listeners. We hope you enjoyed the live episode from wherever you are in the world. We'd love to hear how you are Collaborating. Acting and Committing to real change, take care. And we look forward to seeing you in our final episode. Bye for now.