

Minutes | WRI Global Board Retreat

April 24-25, 2017 | Airlie Conference Center | Warrenton, VA

WRI Global Board Participants: Frances Beinecke, David Blood, Yoka Brandt, Felipe Calderon, Tiffany Clay, Pam Flaherty, Jamshyd Godrej, Jim Harmon, Caio Koch-Weser, Wanjira Mathai, Jeff Miller, Michael Polsky, Roger Sant, Jennifer Scully, Sue Tierney, Clint Vince, Daniel Weiss, Christiana Figueres

Special Guests: Afsaneh Beschloss, Frank Feder, Steve Knaebel, Joaquim Levy, Charlotte Matthews, Lee Thomas

WRI Staff Participants and Guests: OP Agarwal, Sam Adams, Manish Bapna, Steve Barker, Paula Caballero, Liz Cook, Craig Hanson, Kitty van der Heijden, Bekah Holloway, Renuka Iyer, Wee Kean Fong, Charles Kent, Lindsay Kubaryk, Adriana Lobo, Lawrence MacDonald, Becky Marshall, Neil Prakash, Janet Ranganathan, Chad Snelgar, Shailesh Sreedharan, Andrew Steer, Ani Dasgupta, Jennifer Layke, Leo Martinez, Kevin Moss, Michael Oko, Betsy Otto, Mark Robinson, Rina Rodriguez, Rod Taylor, James Schaffer, Monica Walls

April 24, 2017

The WRI Global Board and invited guests met April 24-25, 2017 for a retreat to discuss WRI's next five-year Strategic Plan. Chair of the Global Board Jim Harmon opened the retreat discussions on Monday, April 24 at 9:00am.

The Changing Context

Board member David Blood opened a discussion on the Changing Context in the world, and what threats and opportunities WRI faces as it looks to scale impact. Board members reflected on the shifts – good and bad – that shape the context of WRI's work.

- Threats: Growing populism; rising uncertainty (e.g. Trump election, Brexit); increasing challenge of distinguishing WRI in a crowded NGO space; U.S. politics becoming a distraction; politicization of environment and natural resource issues; closing NGO space (e.g. China and India); a funding model heavily reliant on European governments that are experiencing growing nationalism and competition within governments for scarce resources; economic inequality; fraying of multilateralism; WRI's rapid growth.
- Opportunities: Technology; younger generation drawn towards social justice; WRI's analytical rigor; increasingly evident environmental impacts of climate change will increase demand to solve the problem; "radical ego-less collaboration" among NGOs; chance for NGOs to be "connective tissue" between corporate world, governments, and needs of the planet; climate risk disclosure for businesses; shift in meta-narrative from

saving the planet to saving humanity attracts new support; increasing corporate leadership and responsibility for climate change and development issues; oceans.

- Avoid growth for growth's sake. WRI's success and opportunities can turn into a threat and risk if we are not focused, with loss of impact on the ground.
- WRI is not yet working well enough with companies in a way that they can really hear what we are saying. Need to understand how we can have more traction on the ground, what we can really offer the corporate world.
- WRI must recognize that the world is changing. The people we are trying to convert - utilities, corporations - are already converted. They can't speak as loudly and be spokesmen, but they are already engaged.
- WRI needs to show the trends and hold everyone accountable. Set a bar and be a conscience how the world needs to change.
- A transition to a sustainable economy would touch many more people and be faster than the digital transformation. The world needs to change from a model that is growth at all costs to a model that decouples resource utilization from prosperity and wealth. We need to think differently about how people act. The economic growth opportunities for that transition, dealing with cities, wealth, energy, etc, are all a part of it. The transition will not be incremental, but will be very significant. It will require new/different types of communication, working together, collaboration, etc. – which WRI does very well.

Big Choices

Board member Roger Sant chaired a discussion on WRI's big choices for the next Strategic Plan. Board members reflected on what make WRI distinct and how to best leverage those skills in the coming years.

- Are these the right challenges?: Most Board members see the need for more than tweaking, but not drastic change of WRI's selected challenges.
- Cities – doesn't really fit. It's more a means to achieving our goals, it's not a resource. But Cities are where the revolution is happening – so happy to have it as a main challenge.
- The challenge for the future: De-coupling. Improve the efficiency of our resources while improving development. It should be about the relationship between resources and human well-being. WRI has a huge role to play in getting that message out there, and changing the conversation away from the zero-sum game idea.
- How does WRI develop a frame around equity and human capital and fit that into our equation? The next strategy should include human well-being, addressing issues of equity. The question is – is this a challenge or do we integrate it more into or frame?

- Use language that is accessible to everyone – avoid the terms of art that are incomprehensible to anyone outside of the environment and development sphere (especially important for engagements with business).
- WRI's direction of travel is clear, but speed and scale are not – this is a huge risk. Don't go too far into a new direction, and stay aligned with what supports the core mission of the organization. Future growth must be slower, and also consider who else we could partner with to do the job?
- Centralized vs decentralization – The Board encouraged WRI to decentralize much more, but to ensure good centralized leadership is in place. A strong Global Board with robust collaboration with International Office Boards will help achieve this at the governance level.
- SDGs – How do we take into account what everyone else is doing in these areas?
- WRI has to move away from the silos and see the interconnectness of the issues. The Board likes the focus on systemic changes and moving towards a more positive narrative – what we can do to use resources more efficiency rather than on what we can't do in terms of restricting ourselves.
- WRI must think about what kinds of system shifts we are really talking about and within them, what are we really going to do. From that comes the fundraising strategy, our communications strategy, the second-tier questions.
- We need to integrate in a more comprehensive way the WRI name and brand. But does our work lend itself to a big brand?
- Think tank vs do tank: We need to move forward to be doers but we need to emphasize the real asset of WRI which is powerful human capital and data. We can't be good doers if we lose that. This is our DNA. Our core strength is independent gathering and analysis of data.
- WRI has persuaded countries like India and China, but now we need to persuade the U.S. government and make that an important initiative. Can we expose some key players in the Administration, using key allies, to see our point of view?

The Board broke for lunch at 12:00 pm and resumed the meeting at 1:00 pm. Manish Bapna, Executive Vice President and Managing Director, introduced the next section of the program on the Six Urgent Global Challenges. The Global Directors of each Challenge provided five minute overviews of their program area. The Board then divided into breakout groups to the Challenge area of their choice for further discussion with program leaders. The Board regrouped following back-to-back breakout sessions.

Making Our Global Network Sing

Jamshyd Godrej, Chair of WRI India and Global Board member, introduced the next session on WRI's Global Network. He highlighted the significance of WRI's International Offices in implementing strategies on the ground and the unique capabilities they have in working with leaders in key countries on the Global Challenges.

- **Global Governance Task Force:** Mr. Godrej introduced Board member Pam Flaherty to review the preliminary recommendations from the Global Governance Task Force, intended to help build collaboration and shared understanding among the network of WRI International Office and Global Boards of Directors. The Board discussed the importance of the Sisterhood model for WRI's offices, clarifying expectations between Global and International Offices, and the need for all Boards to ensure that WRI's DNA and values are shared throughout the network.
- Mr. Godrej highlighted the International Office Board Chairs present, including Frank Feder (WRI Brazil) and Steve Knaebel (WRI Mexico). He then introduced the International Office Directors to lead the Board into breakout sessions focused on WRI's International Offices.

The Board reconvened for Executive Session from 6:15-7:15 pm. They then dismissed for the evening to enjoy a reception and dinner. Over dinner, the Board honored Global Board Vice Chair Hattie Babbitt for her years of service on the Global Board. The Board celebrated her exceptional contributions to WRI and thanked her for her life-long dedication to sustainability and human well-being.

April 25, 2017

Breakout Sessions: WRI's Centers of Excellence and Equipping WRI for the Task

The morning sessions from 8:30 am-12:00 pm were organized around small breakout sessions on WRI's Centers of Excellence: Finance, Governance, Business, and Economics. Following breakouts on the Centers, the Board meet in breakout sessions to discuss WRI's funding model, Human Resources, and Risk Management.

Board Business

The Board came together at 1:00 pm for formal business.

- Development Committee Chair Clint Vince introduced Jennifer Scully, Board member and Courage to Lead Dinner Chair, to highlight the October 12 Courage to Lead Dinner. Ms. Scully updated the Board on dinner honorees Darren Walker (CEO, Ford Foundation) and Feike Sijbesma (CEO Royal DSM), and how Board members can support the event. Liz Cook, Vice President for Institutional Strategy and Development, thanked Ms. Scully for her leadership and highlighted that the October 11-12 Global Board meeting would now be held in New York City in order to facilitate Board participation in this event. Ms. Cook continued with a review of revenue and highlights from the Development Committee report.

- Finance and Investment Committee Chair Jeff Miller and Chief Financial and Operations Officer Steve Barker presented an update on implementation of the outsourced Chief Investment Officer and overall financial performance to date.

Resolutions

- The Board unanimously passed a resolution to designate Hattie Babbitt as a Vice Chair Emeritus in recognition of her years of service on the WRI Global Board.
- The Board unanimously passed a resolution to elect Afsaneh Beschloss and Joaquim Levy to the Global Board of Directors of the Corporation of the World Resources Institute.
- The Board unanimously passed a resolution to elect the following Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Global Board of Directors of the Corporation of the World Resources Institute”
 - James A. Harmon, Chair of the Board of Directors
 - Susan Tierney, Vice Chair of the Board of Directors
 - Pamela P. Flaherty, Vice Chair of the Board of Directors
- The Board unanimously passed a resolution to re-elect the following individuals to the Global Board of Directors of the Corporation of the World Resources Institute:
 - Daniel Cruise
 - Jonathan Lash
 - William Richardson
 - Clinton Vince
- The Board unanimously passed a resolution to elect the following Officers of the Corporation of the World Resources Institute:
 - Andrew Steer, President and CEO
 - Manish Bapna, Executive Vice President and Managing Director
 - Steve Barker, Vice President and Chief Financial and Operations Officer
 - Elizabeth Cook, Vice President for Institutional Strategy and Development
 - Janet Ranganathan, Vice President for Science and Research
 - Lawrence MacDonald, Vice President for Communications

Special Topics

Andrew Steer, President and CEO, opened this penultimate session, during which the Board discussed three topics: Resource Watch, Oceans, and WRI’s strategy in Europe.

Resource Watch

Vice President for Science and Research Janet Ranganathan presented the Resource Watch platform:

- The Board agreed that this platform is the perfect combination of WRI's distinct advantage – data and analysis – and meets a critical need not filled by other organizations.
- How can this be sustainably funded? It is both equally important to figure out how to fund this work and keep the data open and free. Are those two ideas contradictory?
- Is there a “pro” version of this platform that corporations could pay to access? If it is free and accessible to all, consultancies will likely use it for information and start charging their clients. Shouldn't WRI get that cut?
- Alternatively, are there individuals or foundations that are motivated by open-source data that would fund this on a long-term basis?
- Ensure WRI's brand is conveyed in the varying platform and modules. There is a need to be collaborative for this to work, but important for funding and profile that WRI is featured. “Powered by WRI” a la “powered by Intel” is one option.
- The data that fuels this must have integrity and be secure – WRI needs to ensure that is the case.

Oceans

The Board discussed WRI's potential work on sustainable oceans:

- Oceans encompass 70% of the world. In order to truly be the World Resources Institute, WRI should pay attention to oceans. There are three buckets to the oceans issue: Fisheries, Pollution, and Climate Change Effects. There is a lot of activity around fisheries, very little on pollution, and nearly no one on climate change effects. WRI is especially well-positioned to lead on climate change effects. It is a heavy lift to start a new program, but it would be great to see WRI play a role in integrating the activities around the world.
- There is tension with adding oceans, and also doing “fewer, bigger” things. But there are baby steps that can be taken: adding reefs to Resource Watch, integrate oceans into other programs and center.
- There is demand for WRI in the oceans space – already, WRI Indonesia is receiving requests from the government to work on oceans.
- Would we be cannibalizing our funding for other programs by taking oceans on? There is some risk of that, but there is a broad landscape of donors in this space that are not currently giving to WRI.
- The next steps are for WRI to explore options and come back to the Board with a fact-base, objective recommendation on how to proceed – including what our competitive advantage is, what we bring to the table, and how it fits with what we are already doing.

Europe

The Board raised a question on the future plan for and objectives of WRI in Europe:

- A lot of funding is coming from Europe. What is WRI's plan for amplifying our presence and messaging in Europe?
- WRI Europe is not a program office, but is key to liaising with funders and representing our work to European leaders and interests in the public and private sectors.
- How can the Europe office raise WRI's profile in Europe? Think of smart ways of partnering with other organizations, increase dedicated communications capacity in Europe to navigate the segmented markets.
- WRI shouldn't underestimate the importance of increasing our European identity as it relates to our funding.

Putting it All Together – Summary and Wrap Up

Andrew Steer concluded the Board retreat by summarizing the key messages from the Board:

- WRI's mission is more urgent than ever. We need to engage with more edge in policy debates, especially in the US, but not giving any ground on the quality and objectivity of our analysis, and the reputation that has earned.
- Our "count it, change it, scale it!" motto captures our special mode of operation well. We now need to take this to the next stage, aligning our resources and energy around major system-wide transformations in city design, energy systems, rural economy etc. We need to identify positive tipping points and work in more ambitious partnerships with others in order to cross them.
- In terms of coverage, the six global challenges are the right ones, but we should actively explore whether we should re-engage on Oceans.
- Our recent "fewer, bigger" strategy is working. We need a limited number of major multi-stakeholder platforms that deliver our analysis, convening, coalition building, piloting and scaling.
- Issues of resource productivity, and the links between natural resources and the economy, should be even more central in our work.
- Achieving the impact we aspire to will likely require that we continue to move further into the "Do Tank" space, but never at the expense of first class analysis, which must remain our core activity and calling card. We must insist on a more effective two-way conversation between "thinking" and "doing".
- Growth of the Institute is not a goal in itself; it must be driven by the imperatives of our programs, and must not come at the cost of the quality of our work or the spirit with which we work. We must continue to invest heavily in our people, and in a shared DNA across WRI's network.
- The recent shift in resources towards international offices should continue. Future growth should be on the front lines in emerging economies and in Africa. Our Global Governance Task Force, led by Pam Flaherty, presented their preliminary

recommendations on how our international boards might work together, which were widely supported.

- Our US program should shift towards working with States, cities and the private sector, but we should continue to engage at the Federal level, working with the private sector and encouraging moderate Congressional Republicans.
- Given the importance of Europe as an innovator in our space, and as a generous funder of our work, we need a more active Europe Strategy.
- WRI's recent growth in overall size and impact has been highly positive, but brings with it new risks. Among the actions moving forward: we will recruit a General Counsel and an Internal Auditor, and continue to give priority to raising unrestricted funds and improving reserves.
- Our funding strategy needs to be as innovative as our program work, especially for unrestricted funds.