

## A RECIPE FOR A HEALTHY PLANET

- **The return to the world after the pandemic is an opportunity to change habits and practices in many areas of our social and economic life.**
- **Here are 7 significant areas where we must act now, both at the local and global level.**

*By Mirosław Proppé, President, WWF Poland Foundation*

The COVID-19 pandemic has locked half of the human population in their homes for more or less lengthy periods. The lock-down has brought the economy to a grinding halt. It will be up to us to ensure that we use knowledge, technology and the needs of the modern world to give us health and prosperity when we open up again, or whether we revert to business as usual that will lead to further environmental damage, another pandemic, overexploitation of resources, and finally to a climate calamity.

The current situation caused by COVID may become a new beginning as economies have to be boosted with additional funds, both public and borrowed, on an unprecedented scale.

**Here are our recipes for a healthy Earth:**

### 1. **Clean Energy, Energy Efficiency**

**We want renewable energy sources, reliable supplies, energy efficiency and target emission elimination.**

The greenhouse effect is caused by the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere. We should commit to and ensure a phase out of coal as fuel in the energy and district heating sector (by 2030), abandon the use of other fossil fuels (crude oil and natural gas) in the energy sector and other sectors by no later than 2050, and open up to comprehensive investments in community and distributed power generation based on renewable energy sources.

**The European Green Deal is a cure for the global crisis.**

### 2. **Sustainable Industry and Close-Circuit Economy**

**We advocate a production and consumption model based on sharing, renting, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling of existing materials and products as long as possible.**

**In 2018 alone, 360 million tonnes of plastic were produced**, most of which was released into the environment, i.e. ecosystems, seas and oceans. The global annual output of raw materials, including inputs in plastic production, trebled between 1970 and 2017.

We are experiencing a higher level of food wasting during the coronavirus pandemic. In total, **one third of food gets wasted** in the world and this may even increase as a result of delays in the supply chain caused by the pandemic or draught.

**It is critical that we close the circulation of materials in our economies.** Ninety per cent of biodiversity loss and water deficit is caused by the extraction and processing of resources. Circular economy makes business sense, too. According to Deloitte estimates, **European Union citizens could save a net amount of USD 630 billion**, or approximately 3% of GDP per annum.

### ECO-TIPS



Think twice before buying new things!



Use things for as long as possible, do not throw them away on a whim – think of alternative uses!



Do not discard things – repair them and use local repair shops!



Do not buy but rent equipment you are likely to use just a couple of times. Look for a rental shop or ask your neighbours!



Enjoy your rental city bikes, scooters and cars!



Swap things you no longer need with others – they may actually need them!



Remember that you can buy your clothes in second-hand shops and online portals to give them a second life!

### 3. Environmentally-Friendly Construction Sector

**We want construction to be future-oriented, new and upgraded buildings to be energy efficient and cheap to inhabit and never allowed to poison us and our friends and families.**

Buildings account for approximately **38% of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in Poland**, thus contributing to the continued climate change. Buildings in Poland consume **41% of primary energy<sup>3</sup>** in their entire life-cycle. Sadly, Polish homes are commonly heated by obsolete solid fuel boilers that largely contribute to emissions in the sector. If we want to bring them down to a level that is safe for humanity in order to achieve climate neutrality by 2050 **we need to introduce a total ban on coal in home heating by 2030 at the latest.** In addition, burning coal or wood leads to 'low-

**stack' emissions**, i.e. pollution with particulates largely contributing to winter smog. Heating homes with solid fuels accounts for nearly half of total emissions of particulate matter which makes it the largest source of such emissions from all sectors of our economy.

If our residential buildings were photographed with a thermal camera today we would mainly see red and yellow blurs representing the heat leaks. Houses are usually uninsulated or insulated improperly yet we are told that a **deep thermal upgrade would help reduce energy consumption by approximately 35-85%**. According to the National Energy Conservation Agency (KAPE) a reduced energy demand in buildings will allow to **eliminate over 46 million tonnes of CO<sub>2</sub> and nearly 90,000 tonnes of particulate matter per year**.

#### 4. Sustainable Mobility.

**We should make use of different modes of transport, we want to breathe in clean air in city centres and feel safe; we want communities to be widely interconnected by affordable and environmentally-friendly public transport.**

Global transport emits huge amounts of greenhouse gases and air pollutants. It accounts for as much as a quarter of total emissions in EU.

The case of Poland demonstrates that as much as 80% of travel is done by people driving their cars. One of the reasons is that a large number of smaller communities have no access to quality public transport or none at all. Poles routinely buy cars and the average age of vehicles is 17 years. Consequently, road transport contributes to premature deaths caused by air pollution (46,000 per year!).

Hence, it is **our responsibility to develop an efficient public transport service** connecting cities and regions within countries, automate mobility and systems to promote car renting instead of car ownership, develop electromobility and support bicycles as the best mode of short-distance transport.

**The objective is to reduce transport emissions by 90% by 2050 in line with the European Green Deal.**

#### 5. Protecting Vulnerable Ecosystems

**The protection of biodiversity, stopping the demise of species, fighting droughts, the conservation of our natural heritage – these are the inherent constituents of sustainable development.**

**Human expansion has caused the Earth to lose thousands of plant and animal species.** Humans account for 27% of total human and animal biomass today. The share of livestock is 65%, and wildlife, including z whales, rhinoceroses, elephants, tigers, hippopotamuses etc., accounts for a mere 8%. In 2050, less than 10% of global land will be free from traces of human interference. **This will be the end of biodiversity on the planet. Unless we decide otherwise...**

The EU recommended action list includes such items as organic farming, fight against overfishing or commitment to sustainable cities with greater biodiversity.

The goals are to protect biodiversity, i.e. to slow down the pace of animal and plant extinction, ensure the Planet has the capacity to regenerate natural resources and provide food for an ever growing human population as climate change impacts are accelerating in a rapidly changing world.

## 6. Sustainable Food Chain

**European food must be safe, rich in nutrients and of very good quality. Food production must make as little environmental impact as possible.**

Meanwhile, agriculture and cattle breeding are accountable for 75% of deforestation on Earth, 69% of its water consumption, 70% of the loss of plant and animal species, 30% of topsoil erosion and 24% of greenhouse gas emissions. Consequently, the Earth cannot regenerate its resources, recover and regain its vitality.

We all depend on agriculture. Due to the hard work of farmers and the planet's resources, people in our part of the globe no longer suffer from hunger. The EU is self-sufficient in most staple foods and is also the largest exporter of agricultural and food products, including processed food, and the largest importer of fish and sea food. Unfortunately, **EU citizens waste a large proportion of their food. They throw away 88 million tonnes of food, or 173 kg per EU citizen, every year.** Altogether, about a third of all food is wasted worldwide.

**While 1.3 billion tonnes of food is wasted in the world every year 135 million people were affected by a food crises in 2019!**

## 7. Eliminating Pollution

**We want clean water, soil and air.**

We are fully in control of our decisions to change behaviours and habits, implement innovative solutions that are healthier for us, friendlier to the environment and better suited to save ecosystems. **Top-down initiatives do matter but grassroots initiatives are critical for change to be successful locally. A good grassroots initiative may inspire a more general reform.**

The we-will-manage-somehow--we always-have mentality has no future and the current pandemic has demonstrated that nothing can be taken for granted any more.

### ***Miroslaw Proppé, President, WWF Poland Foundation***

*Mr. Proppé was associated with KPMG since 1994, one of the largest auditing and consulting firms in Poland and in the world. While partner, he was head of the public administration and infrastructure advisory team in Central and Eastern Europe. Mr. Proppé in his long-standing work as a manager pursued projects in the area of social policy (unemployment counteraction and social policy efficiency improvement), as well as in environmental protection (natural hazards, including Flood Risk Management Plans). He cooperated with representatives of public administration, local authorities, cities and major companies. As a manager, he was responsible for the implementation of complex projects while managing sizeable teams of experts.*

