



RENEWABLE ENERGY IN ANTARCTICA AND THE POWER OF BEING BOLD

RFF Policy Leadership Forum
featuring Robert Swan

Renowned polar explorer, environmental leader, and motivational speaker Robert Swan (OBE) shared his passion about the environment and experiences from the past 25 years in a talk punctuated with stunning visuals and humor at RFF on June 15. Swan, who referred to himself as “the only person stupid enough to walk to both the North and South Poles,” made pleas for protecting the Antarctic from resource exploitation and

making a global commitment to transition the world economy to renewable energy.

The Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty currently prohibits drilling and mining there until 2041, when it can be modified or amended. Calling the continent the world’s “last great wilderness,” Swan said he has made it his mission to make sure it is never opened up for resource exploitation.

Ellen A. Walter

Next year marks the 25th anniversary of Swan's first journey to Antarctica. The original 80-day, 12-miles-per-day walk to the South Pole, inspired by Sir Robert Scott's trek in 1912, became a defining moment in his life, said Swan. Watching the changes occurring on both poles, Swan said he has come to believe they "are like canaries in mines, and we should listen to them."

Swan is planning to return to the South Pole to commemorate the 25th anniversary,

South Africa, Swan's team and his yacht "2041" have traveled almost 120,000 nautical miles since 2002 to connect with and inspire students from around the world. Currently, the yacht is on its way to the June 2012 World Summit in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, where Swan will address heads of state as he did at the first Rio conference in 1992.

More than 500 corporate leaders, educators, students, and entrepreneurs from around the world have joined Swan's team

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sary, this time relying upon only renewable energy for survival. While he noted that the technology to enable such a journey is "not quite there yet," he smiled and said "we're going to do it anyway."

He noted that the long-term solution to the energy question would require a mix of technologies, acknowledging that he would be taking an airline flight that evening, and the ability to take such a trip without relying on fossil fuels is a long way off.

Swan added that "sustainable inspiration" is required to make global environmental progress on sustainable growth. He faulted the current international negotiating framework as fostering cynicism and apathy and called for getting some concrete "wins" to demonstrate progress. He noted that the world had come together to address the threat to the ozone layer through the Montreal Protocol and such achievements tend to be overlooked.

As part of his efforts to increase awareness and inspire young people about environmental issues, Swan has embarked on a Voyage for Clean Energy as well as a series of Antarctic expeditions. Starting in Cape

as part of an annual exploration of the Antarctic Peninsula. The 2012 team will depart from Ushuaia, Argentina to gain firsthand knowledge of Antarctica's ecosystem.

At the RFF event, Swan made the first announcement of his new project—working with the U.S. Marines to help promote and showcase their use of renewable technologies. He noted that renewable energy will help lighten the weight of soldiers' packs and reduce the need for helicopter drops of fuel and batteries.

For more information on Sir Robert Swan's work, visit www.2041.com.