

Björn Stigson's visit Friday April 9, 2010

[Björn Stigson](#), CEO of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development (WBCSD) visited CIS on Friday April 9 and gave 2 special assemblies to CIS students. Mr. Stigson has been president of the WBCSD, a coalition of some 200 leading corporations, since 1995. He now serves on the boards of or on committees advising the Chinese government, the Dow Jones Sustainability Indexes, the Kennedy School of Government at Harvard University, the Clinton Global Initiative and the Global Reporting Initiative.

In the first assembly for grades 8-11, Mr. Stigson presented an overview of his work with the WBCSD. He presented the delicate balance between the business on which we all depend for our goods and services, and the effects of this business on the planet's sustainability. This balance is in danger of being upset in the next 40 years as the population of the earth will increase by 50%, to a projected 9 billion people by 2050. Most of this population increase will be in developing nations that are already stressed for resources. His work with the WBCSD is most crucial, therefore, to preserve the delicate balance between business and sustainability in the face of population growth.



Mr. Stigson presented some data for the students, including the adverse effects of information and communications technology (ICT) and of eating beef on the environment. Interestingly, ICT accounts for 5% of the world's energy use, which is more than the aviation industry. And if we ate less meat, less land would be deforested for grazing pastures, less energy and water would be consumed to process and transport the beef, and there would a reduction in

methane emissions. Land that is currently used for grazing cattle could feed 30 times the people if it were used to grow soya, an interesting fact indeed when faced with a population increase of 50% by 2050.

Mr. Stigson ended his presentation with his reflections on why COP15 was unsuccessful. He feels that a shift in our behavior toward sustainability will not occur through a conference such as COP15. It may not even occur through politics, as few politicians will be elected who urge us to use less ICT and eat less meat. It will be a grass-roots effort from the bottom up, starting with the education of our children.

Mr. Stigson then presented a second assembly for grades 4-5. Although he had prepared slides for this presentation, he was never able to progress beyond his title slide, as he was surrounded by a sea of hands asking questions for the entire length of the assembly! The knowledge and enthusiasm of the students regarding sustainability and climate change was inspiring.



The assembly for grades 8-11 was kicked off with a screening of Alexander Hougaard's 10th grade personal project film, "[Earth in Transition](#)", a provocative look at why he thinks COP15 was unsuccessful, and a very suitable introduction to Mr. Stigson's presentation.

We are very grateful to Mr. Stigson for sharing his time with us, and to his daughter, Sara McAllister, for helping arrange his visit. His grandchildren, Freja (PYP1) and Leo (PYP4) were proud attendees of the assemblies.