

A call to action

Date : 17 Jun 2013

Mr. Tony Henshaw, the Chief Sustainability Officer of the Aditya Birla Group, emphasizes that the Group must find and implement sustainability solutions to survive and thrive in the coming years



“New technologies are one of the most important requirements for creating a sustainable planet. I believe that innovation can save the day, and because of that I think the work that the technology group is doing is absolutely vital to the success of the business.”

These were the words with which Mr. Tony Henshaw, Chief Sustainability Officer of the Aditya Birla Group, began his presentation on the Global Sustainability Scenario. Corporate Technical and Energy Services (CTES) cell seminar, with the theme ‘Environomics: Greener Footprint; Sustainable Growth’, was held on the occasion of World Environment Day, on June 5 and 6, at Gyānodaya.

The first segment of Mr. Henshaw’s talk was on Planetary Sustainability, where he gave a picture of the impact population growth is having on the

earth and its resources and the principle issues of the effects of climate change. In the second segment, Mr. Henshaw focused on Business Sustainability, laying out a roadmap for the Aditya Birla Group and emphasising the need to come up with solutions that will make the business more sustainable. A sustainable business, according to Mr. Henshaw, will be one that is prepared to adapt. "To become a sustainable business, we must take decisions that position us such that we are able to survive and thrive amid the potentially dramatic changes that are going to affect the planet and society in the next 30 years," he said.

To ensure we continue to thrive, as the Group takes its place on the global stage, we will have to analyze the changing international standards and expectations to make sure that our business management systems help us adapt to meet them — we will need to continue to reduce our carbon footprint as well our water consumption, as we continue to treat people well, because, as Mr. Henshaw said, "as an internationally recognized growing company and business brand we wish to show the leadership that achieving the Chairman's vision will require". One way that this can be done is by looking for disruptive technologies that really make a difference.

To illustrate his point that the Group will have to surpass global standards in sustainability, Mr. Henshaw gave the example of how product competition may change to reflect the carbon content from the different energy sources used in production by different companies in the same industry. "It is possible to imagine that in the future, clients offered a choice between a standard product made from materials with high embedded carbon content and another with low embedded carbon that they will see a difference in value," Mr. Henshaw said.

Pointing out that the Group's sustainability programme will depend heavily on the solutions offered by technology, Mr. Henshaw urged the technology unit to "come up with a roadmap to support the Aditya Birla Group businesses rise to the challenge of Mr. Kumar Mangalam Birla's sustainability vision for 2017" in which the Aditya Birla Group becomes the leading Indian conglomerate for sustainable business practices across our global operations, balancing our economic growth with environmental and societal interests.

Before ending his talk, Mr. Henshaw pointed out that the need of the hour was responsible stewardship. "To continue to be recognised as a responsible Group, we have to measure and benchmark our sustainability performance through many indicators such as; incident and accident rates, carbon footprint, water usage, environmental performance and stakeholder engagement to get an idea of where we can make further improvements

today, align with international standards and continue to find and deploy the best available technology. Inevitably, deeper consultation with our different stakeholder groups will be needed to allow us to better understand and forecast the external changes likely to affect our businesses and so take the right decisions to ensure that, in the coming years as the world changes, the Aditya Birla Group survives and thrives as a leading global business.”