

Credit Suisse Supertrends webinar series 2020 Change-makers: Taking the leap to save the planet



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Melati Wijsen, Founder, Bye Bye Plastic Bags & YOUTHTOPIA

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Change-makers: Taking the leap to save the planet

With youth activists around the world taking the lead in calling for global action against climate change, the eighth edition of Credit Suisse's Supertrends webinar series held on August 19 focused on how these young change-makers are driving businesses to reduce waste and carbon dioxide emissions.

“Change-makers are at the forefront of the battle for climate change. They are driving heightened awareness and focus on sustainability and responsibility. So the question we have is, what motivates this young generation and how these youth can accelerate positive change,” said Francois Monnet, Chief Executive Hong Kong Branch, Head of Private Banking North Asia, Credit Suisse, in his opening comments.

To explore this topic, Karen Gilchrist of CNBC spoke to 19-year old Melati Wijzen, an international youth activist who has been working to increase climate action and reduce plastic consumption since 2013. The founder of youth organizations Bye Bye Plastic Bags & YOUTHOPIA, she has successfully pushed for the ban on single-use plastic bags on her home island of Bali. Bye Bye Plastic Bags is now in 50 locations in 29 countries around the world. Ms. Wijzen has been named by TIME on its list of the world's most influential teens.

The start of an activist journey

Growing up amid the natural beauty of Bali, Ms. Wijsen was exposed to the reality of plastic pollution early on in her life. “We would go to the beaches and swim in the ocean, and there would be plastic; we would go sun tanning with our friends, and right next to us, there would be a huge pile of plastic. So it started to raise alarm bells at age 10.”

Those experiences would spark Ms. Wijsen and her sister’s journey to combat the scourge of plastic pollution on Bali. They started by sharing their vision of a plastic-free Bali with their friends, before proceeding to gather a team to discuss what action they could take.

“The next thing you know, we had this massive team of young people to the point where Bye Bye Plastic Bags became one of the largest youth led NGOs in the whole of Indonesia,” she said. “It wasn’t a matter of if we were going to make it happen. It was more a matter of when we were going to get this change happening.”

The organization’s efforts paid off in 2018 when they managed to convince the Balinese government to ban single use plastic bags, a decision that came into force last year.



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Francois Monnet, Chief Executive Hong Kong Branch, Head of Private Banking North Asia, Credit Suisse

Being more than just inspiration

Ms. Wijsen noted that youth change-makers constantly face the challenge of not being taken seriously by decision makers of a different generation. “In a lot of the conferences that we spoke at, we were the only people in the room below the age of 30. We were met a lot of times with the remark that we were ‘inspirational’, which meant basically we weren’t taken seriously.”

She added: “So that is one of the biggest challenges that young change-makers experience. We have to work a couple more steps faster and harder to be taken seriously, and be more than just an inspiration.”

Work with heroes

Youth who aspire to be change-makers need to be patient when advocating for change, said Ms. Wijsen. To accelerate the process, she advised them to collaborate with progressive companies who can act as “heroes” to set an example for the rest of the business community.

“What I’ve learned from being seven years on the frontlines is that you have to find people that are willing to work with you first. Find a couple of heroes to show that if they can do it, other businesses in the area can also do it,” she said.

“Once we found the first five businesses that were big names and had a good reputation to get on board with the movement, suddenly we had all the other big companies, as well as all the little businesses and startups on the island.”

Noting that there was an element of “keeping up with the Joneses” in this phenomenon, Ms Gilchrist said:



Companies see that their peers are doing it, and realise the only way to remain competitive is to get on board as well. And you know, it may be a case of starting at the top and letting it flow down, or vice versa. And that’s really important.

Karen Gilchrist, Reporter, Make It, CNBC

The power of storytelling

Asked what strengths her generation brings to the fight against climate change, Ms. Wijsen said that it was their ability to tell stories authentically, and to spread their message effectively by leveraging their social media savvy.

“Our storytelling comes from a place of authenticity. It is not a money-driven intention or a political agenda. It’s coming from a place where we know we have to do the right thing. So I think that is the power that our generation has,” she explained. “And social media is a tool that accelerates it with one click of a button. We’re able to mobilize, organize and create entire movements.”

Despite the progress of youth movements to raise awareness of climate change and other social issues, she feels that the world is running out of time for real change to happen. “We cannot wait any longer, we don’t have the luxury of time. So we’re not waiting for permission, we’re not waiting for regulation. We’re going ahead with the actions and the solutions right at our fingertips and we’re implementing them. And that is a huge role that we have to play.”



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François Monnet

Chief Executive Hong Kong Branch,
Head of Private Banking North Asia, Credit Suisse



Dr. François Monnet was appointed Head of Private Banking North Asia effective August 2018, based in Hong Kong. Prior to that responsibility, Dr. Monnet ran the Private Banking franchise for Greater China.

In this role, Dr. Monnet works closely with the respective Market Group Heads and Country CEOs across Credit Suisse's integrated bank to enhance its ability to capitalize on the synergies and business opportunities in Greater China and Japan, drive client interconnectivity across business divisions and markets to further build the bank's strong client franchise in the region. In addition, Dr. Monnet is the Chief Executive of Credit Suisse's Hong Kong Branch.

Previously Dr. Monnet was the Chief Operating Officer for Private Banking Asia Pacific from April 2012. In this capacity, he assumed responsibility for all run-the-bank functions, investments in infrastructure and change management, risk and supervisory controls, pricing and strategy, including the build-up of Credit Suisse's Private Banking digital capabilities across Asia.

Dr. Monnet joined Credit Suisse in 2007 as Head of Private Banking Southeast Asia and Australasia until 2010 when he assumed a new responsibility as Head of Ultra High Net Worth clients for Private Banking Southeast Asia, Australia and Japan. Prior to Credit Suisse, he managed the offshore core affluent client segment in Asia Pacific at UBS, with an additional focus on the Singapore domestic market. He started his banking career at UBS Zurich in Corporate Finance and Mergers & Acquisitions.

Dr. Monnet is a graduate of University of Geneva, holds a Master of Arts in Law and Diplomacy (Tufts/Harvard Universities) as well as a Doctor of Philosophy in Political Sciences from University of Geneva, Switzerland. He is the recipient of an Executive MBA from INSEAD. He is a Chartered Financial Analyst.

Melati Wijsen

Founder
Bye Bye Plastic Bags & YOUTHTOPIA



Melati Wijsen is a 19 year old Indonesian/Dutch full-time change-maker.

At 12 years old, she founded Bye Bye Plastic Bags in 2013 with her younger sister Isabel, then 10, and has been leading the movement driven by youth since. After 6 long years on the frontline, the official ban on plastic bags, straws and Styrofoam has been enforced by the Balinese government (June 23 2019). This is thanks to the thousands of supporters and loyal, determined partners on the island. Bali is the first Indonesian province to make the ban on plastic bags happen.

Ms. Wijsen graduated from Green School Bali in 2018, one year early and has been a full-time change-maker ever since.

She also founded the people's movement One Island One Voice in 2015 where over 500+ Bali based businesses come together to say NO to single use plastics. In 2017 Mountain Mamas was established, a social enterprise empowering women in the mountains of Bali: every woman gets paid per bag that she produces and 50% of the proceeds of the sales go back to the community for education, waste management and health insurance, the other 50% help fund BBPB. Melati has spoken on world stages such as TED, the EU parliament in Brussels and the UN in NYC. She has also been selected as FORBES top ten most inspiring women in the country in 2017, Forbes 30 Under 30 for Asia and recently co-chaired at the World Economic Forum.

In 2019 Ms. Wijsen completed the filming of her first feature film length documentary, Bigger Than Us, traveling the world to visit young change-makers. Her most recent project YOUTHTOPIA is focused on empowering more young people to accelerate change by providing them with relevant skills and tools to create impact through peer-to-peer programs.

Karen Gilchrist

Reporter, Make It, CNBC



Karen Gilchrist is CNBC International's Make It reporter for Asia Pacific, covering entrepreneurship, start-ups, careers and more.

Based in the Singapore office, Ms. Gilchrist is the creator and host of CNBC's original digital video series, "Make It International." The series, which shines a spotlight on the rising start-ups across the region, sees her make regular appearances on CNBC's business day programming, as well as appearing across all digital and social channels.

Ms. Gilchrist also writes daily for CNBC Make It's online site, where she focuses on investment advice, workplace trends and leadership insights for millennial audiences.

In addition to editorial coverage, she frequently moderates panels and interviews at major events and conferences in Singapore and Hong Kong.

Prior to relocating to Singapore in 2018, Ms. Gilchrist was based in CNBC's London office, where she covered a range of international business and political news.

She graduated with a B.A. Hons in English Language and Literature from the University of Liverpool.



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