



SCHWARZENEGGER
CLIMATE INITIATIVE

AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT

austrianworldsummit.com

2026

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Summary

The 10th AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT (AWS) was held on June 16th, 2026 under the motto "We Are Unstoppable."

When the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT was founded in 2017, the world seemed defined by rules-based politics, with broad consensus on the necessity of multilateral institutions.

Many people are now asking whether environmental and climate protection still make sense, given the uncertain geopolitical situation and the policies of the US administration.

Our answer now and at this year's 10th AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT was clear and unequivocal: yes, more than ever!

Arnold Schwarzenegger welcomed high-level leaders such as Vice-President Kamala Harris, EU Commissioner Dan Jørgensen, Governor of Minnesota Tim Walz, activists like Heather Mills and next gen climate leaders.

The audience was especially touched and honored by an exclusive AWS anniversary message from His Holiness Pope Leo XIV.

Approximately 1,500 attendees gathered at the Hofburg, with more than 400,000 people joining online, to hear from Arnold Schwarzenegger and a range of inspiring speakers.

Main Topics

- Climate Action is a Marathon, not a Sprint
- Shaping Tomorrow: Innovation in a Changing World
- Purpose and Planet: How Spirituality Drives Climate Action
- How Sustainable Food Can Transform Our World
- Never Give Up
- Driving the Change: Next-Gen Climate Leadership



ONE LOOK



1,500 Summit Guests

130 Journalists

... & Unlimited Solutions

1,530

Online Media Reports Worldwide

found through Meltwater monitoring.

6.5 BILLION

Potential News Reach

Potential reach is calculated by Meltwater based on the estimated average audience of each media outlet that published the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT.

35.2 MILLION

Social Reach (External)

This means social media reach outside of our own channels that we cannot count on our own, so we use Meltwater.

16.5 MILLION

Social Media Views (Internal)

This is what we know from the tools connected to our accounts, i.e. Meta Business Suite.

Introduction



On June 16th 2026 the 10th AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT took place at the Vienna Hofburg, under the motto “We Are Unstoppable”. Presenters **Matt Iseman** and **Alexandra Maritza Wachter** welcomed around 1,500 people to this anniversary Summit.

Monika Langthaler, Director of the Schwarzenegger Climate Initiative, looked back on 10 years of the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT with pride and gratitude. She acknowledged the challenges faced in making the world a healthier planet and emphasized the importance of showing solutions and opportunities to global issues.

She also emphasized the importance of communication, for instance with the first-time Creators Circle (see [here](#)). By mentioning the AWS Solutions Hub, she highlighted the goal of showing practical, hands-on solutions.

We Are Unstoppable

The morning started with welcome notes from the Federal President of Austria, **Alexander Van der Bellen** and Federal Chancellor of Austria, **Christian Stocker**.

President Van der Bellen

emphasized that everyone can agree on the urgency of the climate crisis - no one wants glaciers to disappear, extreme weather to worsen, or pollution to rise. He called out misinformation, such as claims that wind turbines are ineffective or that the climate crisis is "canceled," urging people to counter falsehoods with facts and to discuss what ideas and solutions work best to counter climate change.

He praised California and Minnesota for setting ambitious climate goals despite national resistance, noting that even opposition can be turned into opportunity. Van der Bellen encouraged everyone to use their

platforms and influence, whether as scientists, students, business leaders, or citizens, to drive change. He celebrated the collective power of the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT, declaring that together, we are unstoppable in the mission to address the climate crisis.

Chancellor Stocker

praised the summit as a crucial forum where global leaders collaborate to address

**Long time supporter of the
AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT:
Federal President of Austria
Alexander Van der Bellen**



climate challenges and drive innovative solutions - something that'd be urgently needed in times of increased fragmentation.

Stocker emphasized that climate protection is no longer just an environmental issue - it's tied to energy security, economic resilience, and geopolitical stability. Rising temperatures, extreme weather, and fossil fuel dependence threaten global stability, making the energy transition essential for both climate goals and economic strength. Investing in renewables like solar, wind, storage technologies, and green innovation creates jobs, strengthens competitiveness, and ensures energy independence.

Austria was highlighted for its global expertise in renewable energy, from hydropower to sustainable infrastructure, and its role as a trusted partner in international collaborations. Stocker noted Austria's growing influence, including its election to the UN Security Council, reinforcing its position as a reliable, innovative, and technologically strong bridge-builder.

He called for unity and long-term commitment, stressing that Europe succeeds when it remains stable, rule-based, and trustworthy - qualities that attract investment and



partnerships. The challenges of today, he said, can only be solved through international dialogue, cooperation, and strong multilateralism, with the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT serving as a key platform for these efforts.

Arnold Schwarzenegger

celebrated the 10th anniversary of the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT, calling it a special and successful journey. Starting in Vienna with a mission to end pollution, he faced skepticism but pushed forward, just as he had in his past pursuits like bodybuilding and acting.



Over a decade, the summit grew into one of the world's top climate conferences, drawing global leaders, CEOs, scientists, and activists - pointing out the inclusive spirit of the conference.

Schwarzenegger highlighted its expanding reach, from hundreds of millions of impressions a decade ago to 4 billion last year, spreading awareness about pollution and environmental solutions.

He emphasized that real progress wasn't dependent on Washington but on local governments, businesses, and individuals. The clean energy revolution was unstoppable, with renewables making up nearly 50% of global electricity capacity and 700 gigawatts added in 2025. He shared an inspiring example: in 2003, California took a year to install 1 gigawatt of renewable energy, but by 2026, the same could be done in just 15 hours.

Globally, clean energy technologies - like solar, wind, and electric cars - cut 3 billion tons of emissions annually since 2019. Even China reduced fossil fuel power generation for the first time in a decade, while countries like Norway (96% electric cars) and Uruguay (near 100% clean energy) led by example.

Schwarzenegger praised progress beyond California, citing Texas' renewable energy growth, Massachusetts' clean energy mandates, and Uruguay's clean electricity. He also highlighted Maersk, the shipping giant committing to net-zero emissions by 2040 with methanol-powered ships. He stressed that 70% of pollution reduction happens at the local level, not in capitals. People now understand the need for clean energy and its independence and reliability compared to fossil fuels. Looking ahead, he called for action, not just hope, urging people to learn from one another and implement solutions. Comparing it to bodybuilding, he said, "There's nothing wrong with copying success." The clean energy future is already here - we just need to put in the work.

The subsequent **conversation between Vice President Kamala Harris and Arnold Schwarzenegger**, moderated by Elex Michaelson, spanned the urgency of climate action, the need for bipartisan collaboration, and the power of clear communication. Schwarzenegger opened by welcoming Harris to the 10th Austrian World Summit, framing



climate change as a global challenge that transcends politics.

He praised her work as California's Attorney General, where she held polluters accountable not as a partisan, but as a public servant dedicated to protecting people. Harris emphasized that climate solutions require unity, noting the summit's diverse participation from Green Party members, Democrats, Republicans, and Conservatives. She argued that accountability must be central to climate policy and highlighted how clean energy is now

more affordable than fossil fuels, making it a practical choice for consumers and a key communication piece for politicians.

The discussion then turned to the geopolitical and economic consequences of the war in Iran, which Harris described as a “war of choice” driven by self-interest. She linked the conflict to rising gas prices, which have cost Americans an average of \$500 more since the war started - a burden that pushes many to the brink of financial ruin. Schwarzenegger, meanwhile, criticized the Trump administration's push for coal, pointing out that solar energy has surpassed coal in the U.S. for the first time. He dismissed coal as outdated and deadly, citing 7 million annual deaths from pollution, and advocated for a rapid transition to solar, wind, and nuclear energy. He also called out California's own contradictions, such as high fuel prices caused by a lack of local refineries, which force oil to be shipped out of state and back, creating unnecessary pollution.

Balancing innovation with practicality, Harris and Schwarzenegger explored how to transition from gas-powered cars and oil dependency to renewable energy. Harris championed incentives like tax

credits for electric vehicles and expanding charging infrastructure, while Schwarzenegger proposed mandating solar panels on warehouse rooftops.



Harris also condemned the Trump administration's use of the Department of Justice to target political opponents, calling it “callous and corrupt”. She highlighted that it is important for Americans to remember that the majority of the public supports the alliances the U.S. has maintained for decades. She underscored America's reliability as a global partner and its role as a leading authority on key issues - particularly climate change - and the urgent need to address it to protect the planet. She expressed confidence that the midterm elections would reflect widespread opposition to its policies, signaling a turning point.



Energy efficiency and nuclear power took center stage as Schwarzenegger highlighted California's success in reducing electricity use during peak demand - from 52,000 to 43,000 megawatts - through efficiency laws. He argued for a combination of renewables and nuclear energy, stressing that nuclear is cleaner than fossil fuels despite its risks. He also criticized permitting delays in the U.S., which can stall projects for years, and called for urgent reform to accelerate renewable energy development. Harris agreed, urging that data centers should be required to use renewable energy and invest in repairing America's aging energy grid, built in the 1960s and 70s. The conversation shifted to restoring trust in government and focusing on the future. VP Harris acknowledged that Americans want to believe in systems again but feel the current

administration will leave behind a mess to clean up. She praised Gen Z for their impatience and activism, calling them a driving force for progress.

The final segment focused on rebranding the climate conversation. Schwarzenegger shared an anecdote about a meeting with 20 Republican colleagues, where only two admitted climate change was a real threat - but everyone agreed pollution was a problem. He argued that framing the issue as fighting pollution, not climate change, makes it easier to find common ground across party lines. Polls support this shift: while climate change often polls below 50%, pollution gains 50-70% support. He criticized leaders for using abstract terms like "climate change" or "climate justice" instead of focusing on direct, relatable impacts like pollution-related illnesses and deaths. Schwarzenegger urged journalists and policymakers to simplify the message: terminate pollution, replace fossil fuels with renewables and nuclear, and use clear, fact-based language. He closed with a playful nod to his legacy, tying it all together with a joke: "Let's all terminate pollution together!"

Pope Leo XIV

Message for the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT

Pope Leo XIV welcomed participants to the Summit, emphasizing that sustainability and care for creation are deeply rooted in moral and spiritual values. He highlighted the Church's long-standing recognition of the ecological crisis as part of a broader socio-economic challenge, rooted in the need for justice, human dignity, and the common good.



He encouraged the audience to approach their work with three guiding themes rooted in Christian virtues: faith, hope, and love. Faith, he explained, compels believers to care for creation as a divine gift, reinforcing ethical responsibilities such as solidarity, subsidiarity, and social justice. He stressed the importance of addressing the climate crisis while prioritizing the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable, as their suffering is deeply connected to environmental degradation.

Turning to hope, the Pope acknowledged the global scale of the challenges but urged overcoming fears—such as resistance to change or loss of power—to foster international cooperation and multilateral solutions. He saw religious leaders as key to inspiring hope, drawing on biblical examples where faith overcame fear. He called for ambitious progress at COP30, advocating for a just transition to economies rooted in solidarity and human dignity, with wealthier nations fulfilling their financial obligations to support poorer countries.

Finally, he spoke of love as the foundation for a culture of care for the environment. This love, he said, must permeate all aspects of society—from personal actions to systemic change—inspiring both small, everyday gestures and larger strategies to protect creation. He prayed that the Summit would foster dialogue and contribute to a “civilization of love,” invoking God's wisdom and peace upon all participants.

CLIMATE ACTION IS A MARATHON, NOT A SPRINT

Governor of Minnesota **Tim Walz** and **Dan Jørgensen**, EU Commissioner for Housing and Energy, discussed climate change and pollution during a panel discussion moderated by **Hannelore Veit**. Walz highlighted Minnesota's proactive stance on climate action, emphasizing the state's commitment to the Paris Agreement and the Kyoto Accords,



despite limited support from the current U.S. administration. He noted Minnesota's goal to achieve 100% renewable energy by 2035, five years ahead of schedule, and stressed the economic benefits of clean energy. Walz also shared the severe impact of climate change on Minnesota, including record-breaking air pollution from Canadian wildfires and threats to its freshwater resources, such as Lake Superior. He underscored the global interconnectedness of climate issues and the need for collective action, regardless of political boundaries.

Dan Jørgensen reflected on the evolving narrative around climate change, shifting from purely environmental concerns to include energy security, particularly in Europe. He cited Russia's invasion of

Ukraine in 2022 as a turning point, which forced Europe to accelerate its transition away from Russian gas. Jørgensen shared Denmark's emergency preparations during the crisis, including plans to shut down energy-intensive companies if



necessary. He reported that Europe is deploying record levels of renewable energy, with 89 gigawatts added the previous year and even higher numbers expected this year. However, he acknowledged that the pace of change is still insufficient, describing the challenge as a "sprint marathon" - requiring both urgency and long-term commitment.

Tim Walz highlighted the Republican Party's historical emphasis on states' rights and the autonomy of individual states within the U.S. federal system. He underscored that states, not the federal government, are responsible for running elections, a right

constitutionally guaranteed to them. Walz acknowledged current challenges to this autonomy, particularly in areas like climate change, where he noted resistance from the federal government, such as the cancellation of offshore wind projects.

Despite these "headwinds," Walz emphasized that the business community would recognize the inevitability of transitioning to renewable energy. He pointed out that states like Minnesota are already making significant progress, with 98% of their energy coming from renewables. Minnesota would have implemented policies and climate goals, ensuring that every decision - including infrastructure projects like road construction - goes through a climate action framework.

Walz also praised California's leadership in clean energy initiatives, such as the clean car standards, which Minnesota has adopted. This adoption has expanded the availability of renewable energy vehicles in the state, demonstrating how state-level policies can drive market changes.

He acknowledged that while federal pushback or lack of grants might slow progress, the private sector would continue to invest in clean energy, especially for projects like



data centers that require sustainable energy sources and environmental protections. Walz portrayed states as the primary drivers of climate action, despite tensions with the federal government. He concluded on an optimistic note, emphasizing that states like Minnesota were moving forward with climate action regardless of federal challenges, and that businesses were actively participating in this transition. The example of Texas, often seen as a conservative stronghold, would further illustrate this trend, as it too is investing in renewable energy.

Dan Jørgensen summarized Europe's efforts and challenges in achieving

climate neutrality by 2050. While Europe as a whole aims for this goal, not all 27 member states were initially convinced or easily persuaded. However, he noted a shift in perspective, driven by the realization that dependence on external energy sources - particularly fossil fuels - is unsustainable, especially in light of the crisis in the Middle East. Europe currently spends €645 million extra per day on energy, with no additional benefit in terms of energy quantity, highlighting the financial burden of relying on imported fossil fuels.

Jørgensen emphasized that the solution lies in homegrown energy,

specifically renewables. He explained that the cost of energy in Europe depends on two key factors: the amount of renewable energy a country has and its connectivity to neighboring countries through a well-functioning grid. This grid flexibility is crucial for integrating renewables effectively. The European Commission proposed increasing the budget for interconnectors between countries fivefold to strengthen this infrastructure.

Looking ahead, Walz expressed optimism, agreeing with the Commissioner's statement that the climate effort is a "sprint marathon" - one that requires full-speed dedication. He stressed the importance of collaboration, mentioning themes like democracy, human rights, science, and alliances as guiding principles.

He expressed gratitude for the support Europe has shown, particularly during difficult times, and praised the European Union as a model for collective action that many U.S. states, including Minnesota, follow.

Despite acknowledging the disturbing realities of climate change, Jørgensen remained hopeful, pointing to progress such as the rise of electric vehicles in Germany and shifts in dietary habits among young people to reduce environmental impact. He concluded by emphasizing that while the path may be challenging, the transition to a sustainable future is inevitable and achievable through collective effort and optimism.



António Guterres

Message for the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT

António Guterres, a long-time supporter of the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT, opened by thanking President Van der Bellen and Arnold Schwarzenegger for their leadership during the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT's decade-long efforts to advance climate action. He stressed that the urgency of this mission has only grown as the climate crisis enters a dangerous new phase, with the world on track to overshoot the 1.5°C limit - though he emphasized that bringing temperatures back below it remains possible if decisive action is taken now.



Guterres highlighted the severe energy crisis triggered by the conflict in the Middle East, noting that fossil fuels are destabilizing both the planet and global economies. He pointed out how they leave nations vulnerable to geopolitical turmoil and supply disruptions, while burdening families with rising energy and food costs, as well as escalating climate-related losses.

He championed homegrown renewables as the most affordable, efficient, and reliable solution, free from price volatility and supply chain risks. Beyond their climate benefits, renewables represent a smart economic choice and the cornerstone of energy sovereignty, offering lasting security that fossil fuels cannot provide.

However, Guterres warned that the transition to renewables remains uneven and unequal. He called for faster, unified action to end fossil fuel dependence, build the infrastructure for clean energy, protect vulnerable communities with stronger adaptation measures, and ensure climate justice by fulfilling financial promises to developing nations.

Concluding with a vision of the future, Guterres declared that the fossil fuel age is failing, while the renewables age is rising. He urged collective effort to make this transition fair, rapid, and irreversible, ending with a call to action: "Together, let us make it fair, fast, and unstoppable."

Shaping Tomorrow

Innovation for a Changing World

Innovation has always been seen as the key to sustaining a business. In a world marked by geopolitical volatility and global warming, this message is more relevant than ever. **Hannelore Veit** welcomed **Guangzhe Chen**, Vice-President for Planet at World Bank Group, **Nollaig Forrest**, CMO at Amrize, **Norbert Totschnig**, Federal Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Climate and Environmental Protection, Regions and Water Management in Austria, **Christiane Flehberger**, Head of Retail Banking & Private Banking at Raiffeisen Stadtbank Wien and **Tom Buttgenbach**, Founder and CEO of 1st Avenue Capital on stage to discuss how innovation and climate action go hand in hand.



Guangzhe Chen, World Bank Vice President for Planet, highlighted the growing global focus on climate adaptation and mitigation, even in low-income countries like Zambia. He pointed to advances in solar energy, battery storage, electric vehicles, and small modular nuclear technology, as well as shifts in food systems and sustainability.

The World Bank supports countries and businesses by prioritizing emerging economies and using tools like the Country Climate and Development Report to align climate action with development goals. In conflict zones and resource-limited areas, initiatives like the Fragility Forum help policymakers address challenges such as energy access.

A key project, Mission 300, aims to provide electricity to 300 million people in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2030, leveraging mini solar grids and declining renewable energy costs. Nollaig Forrest, representing the building industry, shared her



company's long-standing commitment to climate frameworks since the 1992 Rio Summit. She emphasized the recent shift from global frameworks to localized action, which led to the spin-off of their North American business, Amrize, as a standalone company focused on regional sustainability and building solutions. Nollaig Forrest highlighted the need for sustainability to be performance-driven, ensuring buildings are stronger, more resilient, and energy-efficient. An example is given of a project with Meta, where a custom concrete mix achieved a 46% increase in construction speed and a 40% reduction in CO₂ footprint, proving that superior performance and environmental benefits can go hand in hand. She also mentioned an innovative MIT partnership to develop concrete batteries, enabling homes with solar roofs to store energy affordably and achieve energy autonomy.

Norbert Totschnig, Austria's Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, reflected on the country's long-standing commitment to climate action. Austria was a pioneer, adopting its first climate change adaptation strategy in 2012, ratifying the Paris Agreement in 2015, and launching the "Mission 2030" energy and climate strategy in 2018. While Austria is on track to meet its 2021–2025 climate targets, achieving the more ambitious 2030 goals will be difficult. The



country plans to rely on carbon pricing, faster renewable energy expansion, and avoiding over-reliance on emission allowances. To drive progress, Austria has introduced support programs for renewable energy, energy efficiency, and electric mobility infrastructure, passed an Acceleration Act to speed up renewable projects.

Christiane Flehberger from Raiffeisen Stadtbank Wien spoke about sustainability being part of Raiffeisen's cooperative DNA. She



highlighted the bank's long-term commitment to regional development and its role as a founding member of the Raiffeisen Sustainable Initiative, which developed a comprehensive climate strategy with the Austrian Federal Environment Agency. She continued explaining why a bank would become an energy provider, emphasizing the role of energy cooperatives in supporting the energy transition. By integrating energy solutions into its "beyond banking" strategy, the Raiffeisenbank would aim to offer customers affordable renewable energy alongside financial services, addressing both economic and daily-life needs.

Tom Buttgenbach, founder and CEO of First Avenue Capital, praised Arnold Schwarzenegger's leadership in advancing California's clean energy transition through policies like the Renewable Portfolio Standard and

AB 32, which enabled businesses like his to develop low-cost clean energy solutions.

He noted that while federal progress exists, U.S. renewable energy adoption is primarily driven by state-level actions, with states like California leading despite federal resistance. Over the past decade, renewables have shifted from nearly cost-competitive to the cheapest and fastest-growing new energy source, reshaping the economy. Buttgenbach linked this to political dynamics, arguing that affordability—especially in energy costs—is key to public support, as rising expenses burden households.

Reflecting on his work, he highlighted achievements like the Springbok 2 solar project, the first to undercut fossil fuel prices, and a Los Angeles project powering 17% of the city with 100 times more reliability at 4 cents per kilowatt-hour—half the cost of fossil fuels. He stressed that innovation and affordability must drive renewable energy's future, comparing its potential to the disruptive rise of digital photography.



Purpose and Planet

How Spirituality Drives Climate Action

What role can spirituality play in addressing complex global challenges such as the climate crisis, pollution, and biodiversity loss? Moderator **Alexandra Maritza Wachter**, **Lorna Gold**, Rabbi **Jonathan Wittenberg**, and **Najma Mohamed** discussed how faith can bridge divides and unite people in climate action.

Lorna Gold, Executive Director of the Laudato Si' Movement, emphasized that care for the planet is a common ground for all faiths. She highlighted that despite divisions, people of different religions share one planet and a belief in a higher purpose. Over the past two decades, faith communities have increasingly come together to address the climate crisis, with Pope Francis' Laudato Si' serving as a significant catalyst. She noted that 80% of the world's population belongs to a faith tradition, making faith communities a powerful force for climate justice.



Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg, founder of Eco Judaism, shared his perspective as a faith leader working across generations. He stressed that faith leaders are being sought after by political, scientific, and economic leaders because they think in terms of long-term impact - not just election cycles. He spoke of the spiritual connection people feel with nature and the need to honor it as a sacred duty. Wittenberg believes that alongside economic change, there must be a spiritual evolution, where faith traditions contribute their unique strengths to climate action.

Najma Mohamed, Trustee of the Islamic Foundation for Ecology and Environmental Sciences, reflected on her experience in South Africa, where faith played a pivotal role in the movement for change. She emphasized that faith helps translate complex climate science into actionable principles rooted in the language of the heart. By framing climate issues in terms of food security, water security, and daily choices, faith communities make these challenges more relatable and inspire meaningful action. She highlighted that faith bridges gaps by speaking to the spirit and values of people, rather than relying solely on statistics.

Lorna Gold reflected on why the climate crisis is also a justice crisis, emphasizing the interconnectedness of the "cry of the earth and the cry of the poor". She highlighted that Pope Francis' *Laudato Si'* calls for addressing both environmental and social justice simultaneously. Lorna cautioned against reducing climate action to merely beautifying spaces without addressing deeper systemic injustices. She praised Pope Leo's moral courage in continuing this mission and stressed that faith leaders must prioritize climate justice and speak out for science and equity. Rabbi Jonathan Wittenberg shared how Eco Judaism integrates climate action into Jewish communities. He noted that Pope Francis' encyclical resonated deeply with him, quoting the Hebrew Bible to emphasize the moral urgency of addressing climate injustice, hunger, war, and cruelty toward non-human life. The Jewish community engages in education, lobbying, and local activism, such as tree-planting initiatives that bring together diverse faith groups. He shared an example of rabbis and Muslim women planting trees together, demonstrating how local action rooted in faith fosters hope and resilience.



Najma Mohamed, reflecting on her journey from fighting racial discrimination in South Africa to addressing climate injustice, emphasized that consumption, development, and industrialization choices disproportionately harm the most vulnerable. She suggested that faith communities can inspire action by meeting people where they are, drawing on principles of accountability, simplicity, and moderation. Najma highlighted the deep kinship with nature embedded in many faith traditions, where care for creation is rooted in love and relational values rather than mere utility. She encouraged discovering what motivates individuals - whether through scripture, cultural practices, or personal values - and using those as entry points for climate and environmental action.

Together, they underscored that faith carries a profound responsibility to drive climate action, merging justice, spirituality, and practical steps to care for the planet.

Richard Gere, world-famous actor and human rights activist, delivered a video message for the 10th AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT that was played as part of the Purpose and Planet panel. He emphasized that while the world may feel overwhelming - with climate change, environmental degradation, conflict, and divisive leadership - this is precisely the moment when individual actions matter most. He highlighted that purpose and hope are rooted in wisdom, compassion, and a commitment to reducing suffering and cultivating happiness for all beings. Drawing from the teachings of his mentor, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Gere underscored our deep interconnectedness, where the well-being of one depends on the well-being of all and the health of the planet.

He explained that compassion must extend to all beings, recognizing our shared desire for happiness and freedom from suffering. From this perspective, caring for nature and caring for each other are inseparable



acts. Gere's message countered the framing of environmental challenges through fear or disregard, instead advocating for awareness, compassion, and universal responsibility as the foundation for lasting change.

Gere shared an example from his foundation's project, Sierra a Mar, which brings together scientists, conservationists, entrepreneurs, indigenous communities, and governments to demonstrate that conservation and responsible development can coexist. The project starts with listening to local people and fosters partnerships that regenerate ecosystems while protecting livelihoods and promoting sustainability.

He concluded with a call to action, affirming that each of us has a role to play in creating a better future. By choosing to care and act together, purpose and hope transform into meaningful change. Gere's message was clear: a better future isn't something we wait for—it's something we actively create now.

How Sustainable Food Can Transform Our World

The only constant in life is change – especially when it comes to food. How we produce and consume food depends on seasons, regions, and traditions. However, traditions are always evolving and adapting. In the panel discussion How Sustainable Food Can Transform our World, **Hannelore Veit** explored ways and strategies of food production that allow each and every one of us to be part of the solution. Her panelists were **Wolfgang Grabher**, Founder and CEO of Sun AG, **Heather Mills**, Activist and Entrepreneur, **Anders Klöcker**, Director of Innovation, Danish Agriculture and Food Council and **Maya Leinenbach**, Food Blogger and Content Creator FitGreenMind.



Wolfgang Grabher explained that his company focuses on soil conservation, a cause close to his heart for over 15 years. Grabher highlighted the alarming loss of fertile soil - from 3,800 square meters per person 50 years ago to just 1,700 today - stressing that it takes a century to form just one centimeter of new soil. To raise awareness, he created Sun Minimeals as an efficient, sustainable food source and traveled to the Yukon to document the depletion of natural resources, releasing a coffee table book titled *The Gold Rush Is Not About Gold* to illustrate how past gold rushes left people with nothing, just as unsustainable practices deplete essential resources today. He reflected on the importance of soil and how to raise awareness about its value. He shared that the previous year's motto, "Be Useful," inspired him to found a nonprofit organization and commit \$25 million by 2030 to spotlight the critical role of soil. To drive home the message, his team conducted a study comparing the environmental footprint of conventional food with that of Sun Minimeals. The results were striking: Sun Minimeals proved three and a half to six and a half times more effective in saving soil, with each portion preserving 1 square meter of



fertile land.

Grabher emphasized that soil is a key solution for combating pollution, and he stressed the importance of making healthy eating delicious and appealing. He admitted that early versions of his products didn't taste good, but he persisted, eventually partnering with Swiss chocolate to create flavors like blueberry white chocolate that delighted consumers. As a testament to their success, they distributed 40,000 units in collaboration with Schalke 04, a soccer club they had sponsored for two years. Grabher's approach proved that people need something they love to embrace sustainable choices.

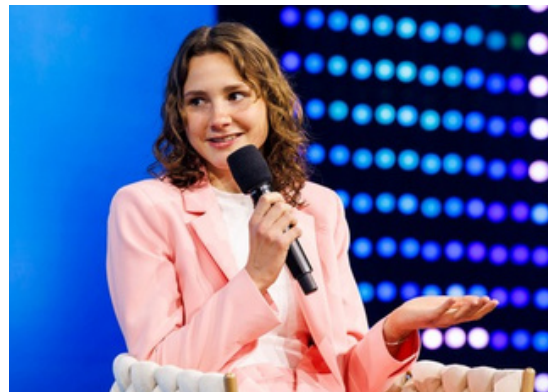
Heather Mills shared details about her companies, VBites and No Bloat, which have been producing food for over 33 years. Mills recounted her personal journey of healing from illness through plant-based diets and her role in creating the first commercial vegan burger, which was



later adopted by McDonald's, Burger King, and Domino's. She emphasized the need to make plant-based options commercially viable and cost-effective, developing vegan cheeses from upcycled ingredients like carrot peels and tomato skins, as well as the first vegan egg that was cheaper than conventional eggs. Mills highlighted how these innovations reduce the carbon footprint of food production, such as her vegan egg, which will be used in 40% of all egg sandwiches in England next year, cutting down on intensive farming. She concluded by stressing that effective food production must be innovative, affordable, delicious, and well-communicated. Heather Mills shared her strategy for motivating people to adopt plant-based diets. After initially struggling to convince others in the 1990s, she found success by focusing on great-tasting food. She would date non-vegans and cook for them, subtly introducing them to delicious plant-

based meals. When she met her current partner, who loved fast food, she recreated his favorite junk foods in healthier, plant-based versions. Mills understood that emotional connections to food - like family traditions - made it difficult for people to give up certain dishes. By making familiar foods in a healthier way, she overcame resistance. She recounted working with farmers and corporations to develop tasty and affordable plant-based alternatives, such as a vegan cheese slice that outperformed dairy cheese in sales. Her approach was simple: provide solutions that taste great and are cost-effective.

Maya Leinenbach shared how her career began at the age of 14. While

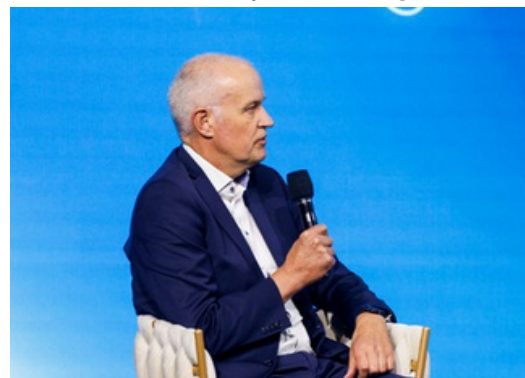


still in school, she was assigned a presentation on how food impacts the environment. The research deeply affected her, revealing the power of dietary choices in shaping sustainability. Unable to vote or drive significant change at the time, she decided to adopt a plant-based diet

and share her journey on social media to inspire others, even as a teenager. Her goal was to use her platform to encourage positive impact, despite her young age. Maya Leinenbach emphasized the importance of a positive and inspiring approach when motivating people to make conscious food choices. She believed in showing that changing one's diet doesn't require sacrifice but can instead be fun, delicious, and exciting. By sharing creative and enjoyable plant-based meals through her videos, she aimed to demonstrate that every food choice - three times a day - can either support or combat climate change. Her goal was to make the transition feel uplifting and communal, proving that changing the world could be both fun and tasty.

Anders Klöcker, Director of Innovation at the Danish Agriculture and Food Council, discussed Denmark's national action plan for plant-based food. He clarified that it wasn't his organization's plan but a government initiative, developed through a broad parliamentary agreement. The plan aims to supplement - not replace - livestock production, with a significant focus on fostering plant-based food development. A standout feature is the Plant-Based Food Grant, a €170

million investment allocated until 2030 to support projects that advance the production and consumption of plant-based foods. Klöcker emphasized the importance of collaboration, criticizing the plant-based sector's past tendency to hoard innovations rather than share them. He praised Denmark's approach, where farmers, food companies, and even livestock-based industries work together under the Danish Plant-Based Diplomacy alliance. This initiative, led by the Vegetarian Society of Denmark and supported by the government, seeks to foster dialogue and cooperation across traditionally opposing sectors



Denmark is now actively exporting this collaborative model to other EU countries through workshops, seminars, and round tables, aiming to create an EU-wide action plan for plant-based food development. Klöcker stressed that cooperation, not confrontation, is key to advancing climate, animal welfare, and human health goals.

Never Give Up

Veronika Aigner and **Benjamin Karl**, two of Austria's most successful Olympians, shared their inspiring journeys of resilience and determination during a panel discussion and were joined by World record holder **Heather Mills** on stage.

Veronika Aigner, a six-time Paralympic gold medalist and recent four-time gold winner in Milan, reflected on her lifelong journey as a visually impaired athlete. Born with only 8% vision, she began para-alpine skiing at age 10 with her older sister as her guide - a partnership built on trust and speed, as they navigate slopes at over 100 km/h. Despite challenges like relying on others for mobility, Veronika emphasized the unwavering trust she has in her sister, who has been her guide since birth. Her story highlights how support, trust, and determination propel her forward.





Benjamin Karl, a four-time Olympian and two-time gold medalist (including a recent win in Milan 2026), shared his own story of perseverance. At just 10 years old, he dreamed of becoming a world champion, but a broken leg two months before the 2008 World Championships threatened to derail his goal. Despite being told his dream was impossible, Benjamin visualized his success and recovered in time to compete. Though he placed fourth on the first day, he went on to win the world championship the next day. His message was clear: never giving up, even in the face of adversity, can lead to extraordinary outcomes.

Heather Mills, a three-time world record holder and the only disabled skier to achieve three world records (including speed skiing at 166 km/h), shared her incredible journey from hiding in a lecture hall to becoming a trailblazing athlete and activist. At 42, she decided to take up speed skiing

in Austria, where she was told she was skiing through Marcel Hirscher's race gates. Despite initial skepticism - both about her age and her ability to compete - she embraced the challenge, partly to prove that veganism provides enough protein and that older individuals can excel in sports.

Mills recounted how her pursuit of speed skiing was intertwined with her activism. After being denied participation in the Sochi Paralympics due to a dispute over her prosthetic leg, she set out to break barriers by attempting a Guinness World Record in speed skiing - on one leg and against able-bodied men. She succeeded, proving that perseverance and defiance in the face of adversity can lead to extraordinary achievements. Mills' story is a testament to how challenges can be transformed into opportunities, inspiring others to push boundaries and embrace resilience.

All three athletes embodied the spirit of resilience, proving that vision, trust, and perseverance are key to overcoming life's toughest challenges.

Driving the Change

Next-Gen Climate Leadership

The Summit afternoon traditionally belonged to (young) entrepreneurs who dedicate their lives to change the world.

Karen and **Alice Chave** introduced their company, Incador Jewelry, which creates jewelry from gold extracted from recycled electronics. They highlighted the environmental cost of electronic waste - 82 million



tons by 2030, with only 22% recycled properly - and pointed out that electronics contain up to 400 times more gold than raw ore.

The sisters, who studied environmental engineering, combined their analytical skills with creativity to design stylish, sustainable jewelry. They emphasized

responsible recycling, breaking it down into three steps: traceable collection, safe gold extraction, and shifting perceptions to make recycling feel inspiring. Their Tech for Treasure campaign placed stylish collection bins on campuses to encourage younger generations to recycle in a way that feels desirable and vogue. Since launching 20 months ago, Incador Jewelry has seen 5x revenue growth and gained recognition in top publications. The sisters playfully pitched Red Bull Racing with an idea: creating the first Austrian Grand Prix trophy using gold recovered from electronics. They invited anyone from Red Bull to collaborate and left the audience with a thought - seeing old electronics not as waste, but as a precious resource with potential.

Birgit Mitter, founder and CEO of Ensemo, took the stage to explain her deep-tech startup's mission. Ensemo, a spin-off from the Austrian Institute of Technology, is pioneering a biological seed treatment technology

to replace chemical treatments in agriculture. The company injects



beneficial microorganisms directly into seeds, ensuring they remain viable for at least six months - unlike conventional methods where microbes often die off quickly. Their high-precision machines process 4,000 seeds per second, treating crops like soybeans with cutting-edge technology.

Mitter shared her journey into microbiology, driven by a lifelong passion for research and discovery. Studying the plant microbiome for 20 years revealed the critical role of microorganisms in plant health and nutrition, inspiring her to transition from academia to entrepreneurship. She co-founded Ensemo to bring this innovation to farmers, supported by Austria's strong funding ecosystem for startups.

Addressing young people in the audience, Mitter advised them to forge their own path, embrace

mistakes, and take action rather than remain passive. Looking ahead, her dream is to make Ensemo's injection technology the gold standard in seed treatment, enabling sustainable, chemical-free agriculture and ensuring safe food production globally.

Anjali Sharma, a climate activist and legal change-maker from Melbourne, joined remotely to share her journey. Born in India and raised in Australia, she was inspired to act after seeing her family in India suffer from worsening heatwaves and floods - disasters that repeatedly destroyed



lives and livelihoods in a country heavily reliant on agriculture.

She took her fight to the courts, becoming the lead litigant in a case against Australia's former federal environment minister, Sussan Ley. Anjali argued that the minister owed a duty of care to protect young people from climate change. Initially,

the Federal Court of Australia agreed, recognizing that future generations deserved protection. Though the decision was later overturned on appeal, it sparked a national campaign to enshrine this duty of care in law.

Anjali, now in her fourth year of law school, plans to use her degree to hold governments and polluters accountable. She dreams of a future where such legal battles aren't necessary but remains dedicated to the cause as long as climate inaction persists.

Her movement gained widespread support, including signatures from global leaders, medical professionals, and young activists. Anjali's message was clear: climate change threatens every aspect of life - health, food security, housing, and economic stability - and demands urgent action for the sake of future generations.

Deborah Gael, co-founder of Koolboks, took the stage to highlight a critical but often overlooked challenge in Africa: the lack of reliable cooling. She introduced Mama Ibadan, a fish trader in Lagos, Nigeria, who works tirelessly to support her family but faces a daily struggle - spoiled fish due to unreliable electricity and cooling. Without access to cooling, her



livelihood is at risk, as spoiled fish drive customers away and destroy her income.

Gael emphasized that while climate change is often discussed in terms of rising sea levels or extreme weather, for many Africans, it manifests as unreliable cooling, which directly impacts food security and economic stability. She shared how she and her co-founder created Koolboks Africa, a startup that leverages sun and water to develop solar-powered cooling solutions. These innovations help small businesses and households preserve their goods, regardless of grid reliability.

However, Gael noted that technology alone isn't enough - access to energy, financing, and opportunities is equally crucial. Koolboks Africa has already transformed the lives of thousands of women, like Mama Ibadan, who can now grow their businesses without fear of food waste. Gael described their solution

as peace of mind, allowing these women to sleep without worrying about spoiled goods.

She concluded with a powerful image from Mama Ibadan's installation day in 2021, where emotions of excitement, hope, and doubt were visible. Today, Mama Ibadan enjoys zero food waste, fresh fish sales, and a thriving business. Gael left the audience with a clear message: Africa does not need saving - it needs cooling.

Timo Bollerhey, Head of H2 Global Foundation, explained the mission of his organization to drive the decarbonization of industry through green hydrogen and e-fuels. He



emphasized that not all sectors can rely solely on electrification, making green molecules like hydrogen essential for industries such as chemicals, maritime transport, and aviation. However, the high cost of green hydrogen - due to its limited production scale - creates a chicken-

and-egg dilemma: low demand keeps prices high, and high prices discourage investment in scaling production.

To break this cycle, H2 Global introduced an innovative trading model designed to stimulate the market. Acting as an intermediary, they purchase hydrogen through long-term contracts to provide producers with the financial security needed to scale up. Simultaneously, they sell hydrogen via short-term contracts to create price transparency and liquidity. While this approach inevitably leads to short-term losses, governments step in with subsidies to cover these trading losses, ensuring the market's emergence. So far, H2 Global has secured €8 billion in funding from governments worldwide, including Germany, the Netherlands, Australia, Canada, and soon India. The organization operates as an independent, non-profit platform, starting with 14 companies in Germany and now encompassing 74 global partners.

Bollerhey stressed that the goal is not to sustain H2 Global indefinitely but to stimulate a self-sustaining hydrogen market within five to ten years, provided policymakers create predictable regulatory frameworks.

He called for urgent, decisive action from governments in Brussels, Berlin, and Washington to support the industry's transition, framing decarbonization and industrialization as complementary rather than opposing goals. Hydrogen, he argued is not only key to decarbonization but also to energy resilience, offering opportunities for both Europe and emerging markets to reduce dependence on fossil fuels and build sustainable energy systems. His vision is clear: no more excuses - just action.

Gabriela Casuso Hernandez shared her big goals for Proyecto Acuática, a mission she began at just 10 years old. Now, at 18 years old, she envisioned two dreams for her organization: first, to make ocean literacy accessible to everyone, regardless of age, background, or location. She recalled her own struggles as a child, unable to find educational opportunities about marine life, and hoped to create a future where no child faced the same barriers. In ten years, she aimed to establish Proyecto Acuática as a hub for marine research, education, and science communication in the Caribbean - a region rich in biodiversity yet underrepresented in global ocean



conversations. This center would welcome children, students, scientists, educators, and communities to learn, explore, and collaborate together.

On a personal level, Gabriela dreamed of discovering and naming a new species, exploring the deep ocean in a submersible, and contributing to technologies that unlock the mysteries of unexplored ocean regions. Yet, her ultimate goal remained simple: creating opportunities for others, especially young people, to discover the ocean and understand their role in protecting it.

She reflected on her journey, noting that her most effective way to inspire others was through educational programs and workshops, which revealed that young people are eager to learn about the ocean. She identified a "triple crisis" - awareness, ignorance, and misinformation - as

barriers to ocean conservation, emphasizing that education and connection are key to overcoming them. Through Proyecto Acuática, she aimed to turn youth from passive learners into active communicators and ambassadors for the ocean.

When asked about staying unstoppable, Gabriela credited her determination and resilience, shaped by every challenge she faced. She shared an anecdote about a young ambassador from Spain who, at just 10 years old, asked a scientist a profound question at an intergenerational event: "Do sharks have personality?" The scientist was so inspired that they later launched a research line based on her question. Gabriela's work proved that education and curiosity could spark real change, motivating her to keep pushing forward despite obstacles.

Amy Ma, founder and CEO of Danu Robotics, took the stage to explain her company's mission: using 3D AI-

powered precision robotics to extract valuable recyclable materials from mixed waste streams. With a background in AI, supercomputers, and large-scale distributed systems, Ma was shocked to discover that waste sorting still relied heavily on manual labor. Determined to modernize the industry, she founded Danu Robotics to replace human sorting with advanced technology, making recycling more efficient and scalable.

When asked about the biggest challenge, Ma pointed to capital growth - balancing the demand from customers with the need for rapid expansion. She also emphasized the importance of responsible AI use, quoting Spiderman's "With great power comes great responsibility" to highlight the need for ethical and purposeful technology deployment.

Reflecting on her childhood, Ma shared that she initially dreamed of becoming a zookeeper but realized that technology could offer better solutions for harmony with nature. Her passion for environmental protection was sparked at a young age after watching a documentary on industrial farming, which left her determined to drive change.

Facing challenges, Ma credited her team of talented engineers and the power of community for keeping her



unstoppable. For Danu Robotics to reach the next level, she called on influencers, investors, and anyone with access to recycling facilities, data centers, or large events to reach out - whether for partnerships, grants, or capital investment.

Caroline Chen, CEO of Aquanet Power, shared her remarkable journey from being a commercial lawyer - where she fought for justice in courtrooms - to becoming a climate tech founder tackling environmental injustice. After representing a renewable energy company in the early 2010s, she became inspired by the scientists, activists, and engineers building solutions for a sustainable future. This led her to leave her prestigious legal career, not because she stopped believing in justice, but because she found a bigger case to fight - one that played out in our coastlines, ecosystems, and air.

Chen became CEO of Aquanet Power, a company dedicated to harnessing wave energy, the largest untapped renewable resource on Earth. She recounted her personal resilience, born from overcoming extreme challenges early in life - being born prematurely and facing societal biases - as a metaphor for her company's persistence. Despite no revenue, enormous debt, and



skeptics who called her goals impossible, Aquanet Power ran three real-sea trials, learning from each failure and refining their technology. Their breakthrough came with a turbine that captures both the upswing and downswing of waves, generating 1 megawatt of electricity per turbine and working anywhere the ocean touches.

This technology can also desalinate seawater and produce green hydrogen, addressing two of the world's greatest crises: water scarcity and clean fuel.

Chen called on the audience to add their "wave" to the movement, whether through policy, finance, industry partnerships, or simply sharing the conversation. She reminded everyone that change doesn't happen alone - it takes collective effort. Her story was a testament to the power of resilience, innovation, and the belief that no challenge is too great to overcome.

Call to Action

Arnold Schwarzenegger closed the 10th Austrian World Summit by honoring **Jane Goodall** as an inspirational figure and praising the multigenerational participation, especially the youth. He urged young attendees to speak up, take action, and drive change, emphasizing that they are the future.

Schwarzenegger expressed pride in the conference's growth, calling it the largest yet, and reaffirmed the commitment to fighting pollution and promoting a clean earth.

Together with Monika Langthaler, he announced the Summit's return in 2027 on June 8th, 2027.



Austrian Post goes Green

Vienna has become the largest European city to achieve fully CO₂-free last-mile postal delivery. By scaling electric mobility across all delivery types – from letters to parcels – the initiative establishes a replicable model for metropolitan areas worldwide.

This milestone was celebrated on June 15th with **Arnold Schwarzenegger**, Austrian Post AG CEO **Walter Oblin**, Vienna City Councillor for Climate **Jürgen Czernohorszky** and Minister for Energy **Wolfgang Hattmannsdorfer** at Vienna Heldenplatz.





In 2026, for the first time, the Schwarzenegger Climate Initiative launched the AWS Creators Circle. The Creators Circle brings together selected creators to share the Summit experience with their communities.

The AWS Conference Expo took place as a sustainable exhibition platform that brought together 15 organizations, including established companies, start-ups, and NGOs.



Lemo and his band performing on this AWS stage

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