



Christian Kullmann is the Chairman of the Executive Board of Evonik

Engineers of the Future

by Christian Kullmann

Economic success and environmental protection are not mutually exclusive. On the path to a sustainable economy, we don't need new restrictions or symbolic sacrifices. We need more innovation. And when it comes to innovation, our company is an outstanding source

In the social networks, on the street, and of course in the media, the public debate about climate change and the climate crisis is ever-present—and it is being conducted across increasingly hardened fronts. But its common denominator is the smallest conceivable one: All of us naturally want to preserve a livable planet for our children. But instead of conducting the discussion with objective arguments, people are conjuring up a struggle between nature and industry. That isn't the right way forward. At best, it leads to symbolic actions and global competitive avowals. These in turn corrode public trust in politics and industry in equal measure. And they are counterproductive, because the chemical industry in particular is a key factor in the effort to better protect our climate.

“There should be no contradiction between environmental protection and sustainability on the one hand and growth and profitability on the other”

We don't need repeated restrictions and more and more sacrifice. We need policies that optimally promote innovations. If we here in Germany don't demonstrate that protection of the climate and the environment goes hand in hand with economic growth and social well-being, we'll be the losers. In any case, the goals of the Paris climate agreement cannot be achieved without the chemical industry. No wind turbines can spin without our technology, and no electric cars can drive without our products. We are the engineers of the future.

EVONIK IS THE DRIVING FORCE

Those who continually preach sacrifice and aim to achieve change through restrictions will never be global pioneers. Whereas the community of nations is still discussing climate protection measures, many companies have long been taking action. At Evonik we want to be the drivers of solutions for urgent future-related issues. We are therefore systematically implementing our strategy for climate change and sustainability. The goal we have set for ourselves is more ambitious than the German government's plan for Germany as a whole. Evonik aims to cut its absolute emissions in half in the period between 2008 and 2025, while significantly boosting our sales by manufacturing sustainable products.

Today, products whose application demonstrably leads to greater sustainability and improved resource efficiency already account for more than half of Evonik's sales.

Additives from Evonik make wind turbines and solar panels highly efficient and durable. Silicon dioxide from Evonik improves heat insulation in buildings. Materials from Evonik that are used in separators and cathodes make batteries for electric cars safer and more efficient.

MAKING CO₂ USEFUL

The chemical industry needs massive amounts of energy. But switching our energy supply completely to CO₂-neutral electrical energy would be only theoretically possible. In reality, “green” energy is neither available nor affordable in the amounts that chemical production processes need. That's why we're working on alternative solutions for our own processes and our customers' products, as well as answers to the question of what should happen to CO₂ emissions.

We want to not merely reduce CO₂ emissions but to make them useful as a raw material. In cooperation with Siemens, Evonik is researching electrolytic and fermentation processes that make artificial photosynthesis possible. In this context we are producing chemicals with the help of CO₂, “green” electricity, and bacteria. This is a technology that in the future could be set up wherever CO₂ is generated.

Investments in research and development are just as essential as partnerships across sector boundaries. People who celebrate the companies that sell electric cars while demonizing the sector that makes the produc-

tion of these cars possible are lacking in the vital understanding of value chains.

Customers and investors are demanding that we grow. Besides, we can only hold our ground in global competition if we grow and are profitable. That's why there should be no contradiction between environmental protection and sustainability on the one hand and growth and profitability on the other. The good news is that they are mutually compatible. Sustainability has always been our business. Thinking in terms of the future has always meant taking our environment into account just as much as the well-being of our children and grandchildren. We have to factor in not only the environmental aspects of transformational processes but also their social acceptability. That's because genuine sustainability is only achieved when our planet, people, and the economy ultimately benefit in equal measure.

TOGETHER TO THE GOAL

Through our areas of expertise we can make a huge contribution to a more sustainable future. But as long as not enough “green” energy is available at competitive prices, and as long as we are still researching the use of alternative raw materials, we reject dictates and dividing lines. We need the trust of the public as well as support from political decision-makers. Only if we work together will we succeed in making sustainable business operations even more attractive through innovations—and leaving a livable planet behind us for future generations. —