

# CLIMATE ACTION MAGAZIN

THE SCHWARZENEGGER CLIMATE INITIATIVE

WE ARE UNSTOPPABLE

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ARNOLD'S CLIMATE LEGACY

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# WHY *PERSISTENCE* CHANGES THE WORLD

**THERE ARE MOMENTS IN HISTORY** when the direction of our society is decided. Not because everything suddenly becomes clear, but because many things begin to shift at once.

We are living in such a time. Wars are shaking large parts of the world. Questions of security dominate political debates. Economic uncertainty concerns governments, businesses, and families alike. Much of what once seemed certain now appears fragile.

Yet many of these crises do not emerge in a vacuum. Behind these immediate conflicts lie long-term challenges we have not yet adequately addressed: the secure supply of clean energy, the stability of our food systems, the management of limited resources, and a changing climate.

What appears today as an acute crisis is often also a sign that we should have tackled these fundamental issues earlier and more decisively.

This is precisely why it is so important to think beyond the present moment—not only to react to crises, but to develop solutions for the future now. Because progress rarely happens in calm and easy periods of history. It happens when people have the courage to keep thinking ahead despite uncertainty—when they refuse to accept that crises are a reason to abandon ambitious goals.

Many of the changes we now take for granted began exactly this way. Mahatma Gandhi upheld his commitment to nonviolent resistance for decades, even when independence seemed far out of reach. Martin Luther King Jr. fought tirelessly for civil rights, fully aware that every step forward would meet fierce resistance. Climate action today also faces

powerful opposition. Parts of the oil industry—often referred to as “Big Oil”—invest enormous sums to slow progress, sow doubt, and defend existing structures. Yet this, too, is not a new pattern in history: major transformations almost always face resistance from those who benefit from the status quo.

## HISTORY IS WRITTEN BY THOSE WHO DO NOT STOP

Few embody this mindset as strongly as Arnold Schwarzenegger. Throughout his life, he was repeatedly told that things were impossible: that a young man from Austria could not dominate the world of bodybuilding; that he could not build a career in Hollywood; that an immigrant could not become Governor of California; and that a Republican could not become one of the most outspoken voices for climate action. Yet Arnold has proven throughout his life that doubt is not an obstacle—but a driving force. With that same determination, nearly a decade ago he launched the Austrian World Summit. What began as a bold initiative has become an international platform. Decision-makers, entrepreneurs, innovators, and committed citizens from around the world come together here with a shared goal: to advance solutions.

## THIS YEAR MARKS THE 10TH AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT.

Ten years are more than just an anniversary. They are proof that persistence makes a difference—that an idea can grow into a movement, and that progress is possible when people stay committed. The challenges of our time are immense. But the determination of those working on solutions is even greater. Because history shows us again and again: The future belongs to those who don't give up — WE ARE UNSTOPPABLE!

**MONIKA LANGTHALER**

Director, Schwarzenegger Climate Initiative





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OUR MOTTO:  
**WE ARE  
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JOIN **PUMP  
FOR THE  
PLANET**

# WE ARE UNSTOPPABLE

**TEN YEARS AGO**, we started the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT with one mission: bring people together to prove that real action for a healthy planet is not just about talk: it is about results. Today, as we celebrate our 10th Summit, that mission is stronger than ever. This year's message is simple but strong:

## **WE ARE UNSTOPPABLE.**

Why? Because I have seen what happens when people stop waiting and start leading. I have seen cities clean their air. I have seen businesses cut pollution and grow stronger. I have seen innovators create jobs, wealth, and cleaner energy at the same time. And I have seen citizens everywhere refuse to accept that the future must be dirty, weak, or divided.

There will always be people who say it cannot be done. There will always be those who complain, delay, and defend the past. But history does not belong to the complainers. It belongs to the builders. It belongs to the people who take action.

That is what our Summit is about. It is about mayors electrifying transport. CEOs investing in clean industry. Engineers designing the next breakthrough. Young people demanding courage. Communities proving that sustainability is not sacrifice — it is opportunity.

We know the truth: clean energy means independence. Clean air means health. Innovation means jobs. Climate and environmental action mean strength!

So when people ask if progress can continue in difficult times, my answer is: absolutely. We do not need permission to lead. We need determination. We need courage. We need action.

To everyone joining us for this special anniversary: thank you. You are the reason this movement keeps growing. You are the heroes who turn ambition into reality.

Ten years down. The next decade begins now.

So let us move forward together with confidence, with urgency, and with the spirit that defines our movement! Together **WE ARE UNSTOPPABLE.**

**ARNOLD  
SCHWARZENEGGER**





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# AWS 2026

## WE ARE UNSTOPPABLE

**Pollution is not an abstract environmental issue. It is a daily assault on human health, on quality of life, and on the future of entire societies. For decades, Arnold Schwarzenegger has used his voice to fight for a clean and healthy planet. Today, in a world shaped by geopolitical tensions, economic uncertainty, and record-breaking temperatures, one truth becomes increasingly clear: the fight against pollution is a fight for human survival and for dignity.**

► By Daniel Böhm

**THE NUMBERS ARE STARK.** Air pollution is responsible for around 8.1 million deaths globally each year. More than 700,000 of those are children under the age of five. According to the World Health Organization, it remains one of the greatest environmental risks to

human health. The Lancet Commission on pollution and health estimates that pollution contributes to roughly one in six deaths worldwide. These are not distant statistics. They translate into asthma, heart disease, strokes, cancer and millions of shortened

lives. They also mean overwhelmed health systems and rising economic costs.

At the same time, the global situation is increasingly complex. Climate action is competing with crises, conflicts, and shifting political priorities. Yet this is precisely why persistence matters. Progress has been made. Millions of lives have improved through clean energy and better policies, but it is uneven and fragile. If we stop, pollution does not. It continues to accumulate silently, disproportionately affecting the most vulnerable.

Clean energy is a critical part of the solution. Every shift away from fossil fuels reduces emissions and improves the air people breathe. It reduces hospital admissions, lowers healthcare costs, and increases productivity. As Maria Neira, former Director of Public Health and Environment at the World Health Organization, has emphasized, clean air is not a luxury, but a fundamental condition for health and well-being. The transition to clean energy is therefore not only about climate, it is about protecting people and improving everyday life.

Arnold Schwarzenegger has made this point for years: clean air and clean water are not partisan issues. They are basic human needs. He has also been clear that complaining does not clean the air, build solutions, or protect the next generation. Action does. His message is simple: leadership means delivering results that people can breathe, feel, and live with. This is where the motto "WE ARE UNSTOPPABLE" be-



comes more than a slogan. It reflects a simple reality: change is driven by those who keep moving: cities, businesses, communities, and individuals, despite resistance. Real progress does not wait for perfect consensus. It happens when people decide to act.

The United Nations Environment Programme shows that cutting key pollutants can deliver rapid health gains while slowing global warming. This dual impact makes pollution one of the most powerful levers for improving quality of life, here and now.

Ten years of THE AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT demonstrate exactly this principle. Since 2017, the Summit has grown into a global platform for solutions, connecting leaders and turning ideas into action. It has shown that collaboration across sectors and borders is not only possible, but effective. Its anniversary is not just symbolic. It proves that persistence builds momentum and that action inspires more action.

In a fragmented world, that continuity matters. It shows that even when politics stall, progress is still possible. It reminds us that solutions already exist and that scaling them is a question of will. Cleaner air means healthier lives, stronger economies, and more resilient societies. It means better opportunities, greater stability, and a higher quality of life for billions of people. If pollution is relentless, our response must be even more so.

**WE ARE UNSTOPPABLE.**



# CLIMATE HEROES

Our speakers come from many different fields: politics, sport, food, business and culture. What connects them is the idea that everyone can contribute to a healthier planet in their own way: through ideas, leadership, creativity, innovation or simply by inspiring others. We are delighted to welcome so many exciting voices to this year's AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT. Here are some of the highlights.



## SUPPORTER FROM DAY ONE

**ANTÓNIO GUTERRES** has been a supporter of the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT from day one. As Secretary-General of the United Nations, he has consistently used his voice to underline the urgency of climate action, the need to fight pollution, and the importance of international cooperation. His continued engagement gives the Summit global weight and connects its practical, solutions-driven spirit with the broader mission of the United Nations. Through his messages and appearances over the years, Guterres has helped frame the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT as more than a conference: as a platform for action, persistence, and shared responsibility in the fight for a clean and healthy planet.



## BUSINESS WITH PURPOSE

**HEATHER MILLS** has built a remarkable career as an entrepreneur, author and advocate, with a strong focus on plant-based food and sustainable living. Her work has helped bring vegan products and alternatives into the mainstream, showing how innovation can influence everyday choices. Rather than treating sustainability as a niche topic, she has approached it through business, accessibility and practical solutions. Her perspective connects personal conviction with entrepreneurship and shows how food, health and environmental awareness can become part of a wider conversation about the future.



## GOING FURTHER TOGETHER

**JOHANNES AND VERONIKA AIGNER** stand for determination, trust and outstanding teamwork. As visually impaired Para alpine skiers, the siblings compete at the highest international level and proved it once again at the Milano Cortina 2026 Paralympic Winter Games, winning nine medals between them for Austria, seven of them gold. Their story is one of discipline, courage and mutual confidence, reaching far beyond sport. As athletes whose careers are closely connected to nature, they also bring a natural perspective on winter, nature and alpine landscapes. At the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT, they remind us that progress is often built on persistence: not giving up, trusting each other and continuing the race even when conditions are difficult.



© Luna Kloess



WE ARE UNSTOPPABLE

## WHERE FOOD MEETS FUTURE

**MAYA LEINENBACH**, known worldwide as @ftgreenmind, has inspired millions of people with simple, creative plant-based recipes. Through social media, books, cooking content and now her own TV show *Better Than Beef*, she has made vegan food feel approachable, modern and enjoyable — especially for a younger audience. Her work is not about preaching, but about showing how easy and delicious plant-based cooking can be. In doing so, she opens an accessible door to more conscious everyday choices, where taste, lifestyle and sustainability can naturally come together.



© Tim Walz

## LEADING FROM THE STATE LEVEL

**TIM WALZ** brings the perspective of political leadership and public service to the conversation. As Governor of Minnesota, he has focused on issues ranging from education and infrastructure to clean energy, jobs and community resilience. Minnesota has set ambitious climate goals, including a legal requirement for utilities to deliver 100% carbon-free electricity by 2040. Even amid federal challenges and shifting national priorities, the state continues to pursue its own path, showing how climate and energy policy can move forward at state level. His work reflects the challenge many governments face today: how to prepare societies for the future while addressing people's immediate needs. His participation adds a practical political perspective on how transformation can be shaped at state and regional level.

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# A LEGACY FOR THE PLANET

## How Arnold Schwarzenegger and Monika Langthaler turned climate action into a global platform.

► By Natascha Unger

**VIENNA**, late spring 2017. Dozens of journalists follow Arnold Schwarzenegger into the Hofburg Palace conference hall, cameras clicking, microphones extended. He navigates the crowd with the same confidence that has defined his public life for decades, finally taking his seat at the front of the room. The hall is filled with heads of state, CEOs, civil society, and scientists.

Schwarzenegger is not here to promote a film, nor to campaign for office. He is here to talk about the environment—and about ending pollution. On stage, he cuts through ideology with effortless clarity: “There is no conservative air or liberal air,” he tells the audience. “We all breathe the same air.”

The line lands not as a slogan, but as a truth. Reducing greenhouse gases, in Schwarzenegger’s telling, is not a matter of political identity. It is a question of shared responsibility—and shared consequences.

Ten years after the first Austrian World Summit, the scene has become familiar. And yet it still carries a certain improbability. Few global climate gatherings revolve so visibly around a single individual—let alone one whose public life began with bodybuilding trophies and blockbuster films.

Schwarzenegger stands at the centre of the stage, not as a politician, but as something harder to de-



Arnold shares the story behind his environmental crusade

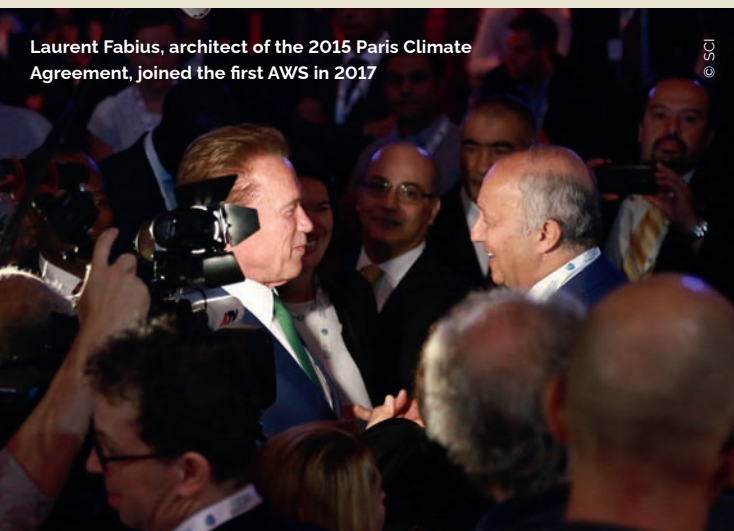
fine: a communicator, a catalyst, a broker of unlikely alliances. Over the past decade, the Austrian World Summit has become a fixed point in the international climate calendar—a place where politics meets business, where urgency is paired with pragmatism, and where rhetoric is expected to lead to action. While Schwarzenegger commands the spotlight, the Summit could not exist without another figure, whose vision and tireless work make it possible.

The story of the Summit—and of Schwarzenegger’s broader environmental legacy—reaches further back. It begins in post-war Austria, in a childhood defined by discipline and scarcity, yet also by the rugged beauty of the countryside. And it reaches into another life: that of a young woman who, at just twenty-five, entered Austria’s National Parliament as the youngest Green MP in the Second Republic. That woman, Monika Langthaler, would decades later become the driving force behind the Austrian World Summit.

To understand how Schwarzenegger’s environmental efforts took shape—and how the Summit became one of their most tangible expressions—we have to look back, not at one biography, but two.

### HIS FIRST ENVIRONMENT

“I remember growing up in Thal, playing in the woods, swimming in the lake. That’s where my love for nature started,” Schwarzenegger recalls. In his youth, nature was not something to be sought out. It was simply there—present, immediate, and woven into everyday life.



Laurent Fabius, architect of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, joined the first AWS in 2017

He was born in 1947, into a country still recovering from war. Discipline structured life at home, while the outdoors offered a contrasting space—less defined, shaped by experience rather than instruction.

There is no indication that these early experiences were understood in environmental terms at the time. The language of climate protection or sustainability did not yet exist in the way it does today. Yet what can be observed in retrospect is a familiarity with nature not as an abstract category, but as a lived and immediate environment.

This remains visible in how Schwarzenegger speaks about environmental issues. His language tends to be concrete rather than technical—focused on breathing, visibility, and lived conditions. This is what makes his communications around the topic so unique and accessible to a broad audience.

At the same time, that was not the limit of his ambitions. Those ambitions emerged early and pointed outward. Bodybuilding became the first vehicle—an arena defined by discipline, measurement, and self-transformation. His move to the United States was driven by opportunity rather than environmental

awareness. Yet it marked a decisive shift: from rural landscapes to urban scale.

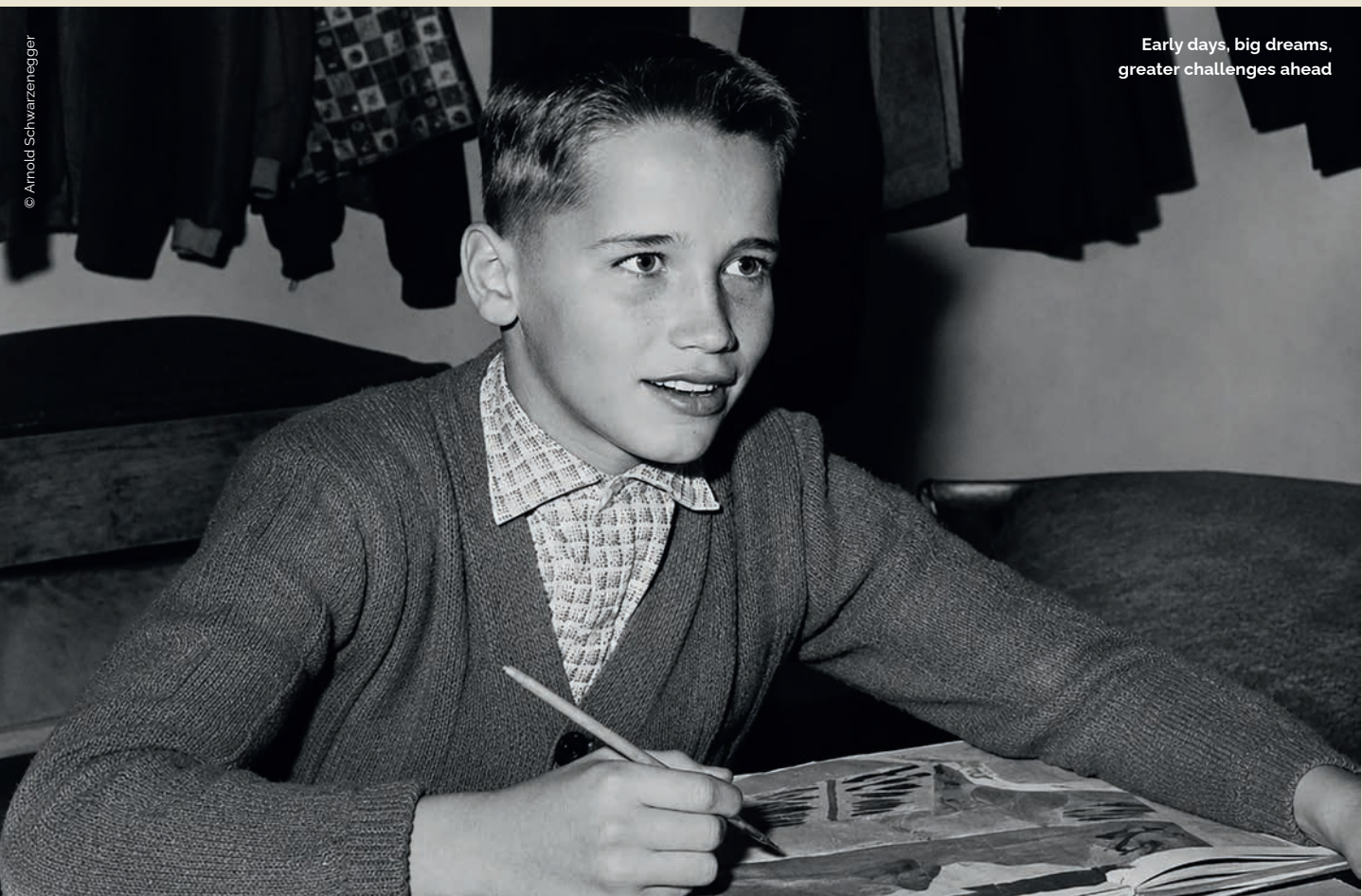
Arriving in California in the late 1960s, he encountered a different reality. The clarity of Alpine air stood in contrast to the smog of Los Angeles, where pollution had already become part of everyday life. These differences were not yet political for him—but they were tangible.

Over time, they formed a quiet foundation: an awareness of environment not as theory, but as experience.

## REWRITING THE RULES OF ENVIRONMENTAL LEADERSHIP

When Schwarzenegger was elected Governor of California in 2003, environmental policy moved to the center of his agenda. At the time, the state faced rising energy demand, increasing pollution, and growing evidence of global warming.

"I understood why people were skeptical," he later said. "I was new to politics... a Hummer-driving



Early days, big dreams,  
greater challenges ahead

## FROM STATE LEADERSHIP TO GLOBAL CLIMATE NETWORKS

When Schwarzenegger left office in 2011, his environmental work did not end—it expanded.

The logic that had shaped his governorship in California carried forward: climate change could not wait for political consensus at the national or international level. Action would have to come from those closest to implementation—regions, cities, and local governments.

This approach reflected a broader shift in international climate policy at the time. In the wake of the 2009 Copenhagen summit, and under UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, increasing attention was placed on the role of subnational actors and multi-level cooperation in driving measurable progress.

Against this backdrop, Schwarzenegger became involved in a range of international efforts aimed at strengthening climate action beyond the nation-state. One of these was the R20 Regions of Climate Action, which focused on connecting regions, provinces, and

Republican.” Rather than stepping into an existing political framework, he reframed the issue. Climate action and terminating pollution in his approach, was not ideological—it was practical. It was about results.

Policies such as the Global Warming Solutions Act (AB 32) and the Million Solar Roofs Initiative did more than regulate emissions. They repositioned California as a laboratory for climate policy—one in which environmental protection, economic growth, and technological innovation were treated as interconnected rather than conflicting goals.

At the signing of AB 32, Schwarzenegger framed the legislation as a responsibility to future generations, arguing that governments must do everything in their power to slow global warming. “We have to show leadership in protecting our environment so that we have a future for our children and grandchildren,” he said. He also rejected the assumption that environmental regulation conflicted with economic growth, insisting that such policies were ultimately good for business.

The impact extended beyond California. The state’s cap-and-trade system, renewable energy targets, and low-carbon fuel standards became reference points for governments around the world. What had once been seen as ambitious began to look practical—and replicable.

In the years that followed, California leaders would continue to build on this foundation. The state’s climate trajectory today still reflects decisions made during that period, when environmental policy was embedded not only in regulation, but in the economic logic of the state.

By the end of his tenure, Schwarzenegger had helped shift the perception of climate policy itself—from a constraint to a driver of transformation.

Again and again, Arnold returned to the nature that shaped him



Governor Schwarzenegger signs the historic global warming emissions reduction bill



Solar power becomes part of Arnold's legacy

cities and supporting them in developing and financing concrete projects in areas such as renewable energy, energy efficiency, and sustainable infrastructure.

Rather than standing alone, R20 reflected a broader direction: moving from negotiation to implementation, and from global targets to locally delivered solutions.

Over time, these experiences pointed toward a wider need—not only for projects, but for platforms that could connect actors across sectors and sustain collaboration.

That idea took clearer shape in 2018, when Schwarzenegger, together with Monika Langthaler, founded the Schwarzenegger Climate Initiative in Vienna. Building on the lessons of his governorship and his prior international work, the Initiative created a framework that brings together politics, business, science, and civil society, supporting solutions beyond individual projects or events. The Austrian World Summit would become its most visible expression.

At the same time, the intellectual foundation of Schwarzenegger's post-governorship work was further strengthened through the USC Schwarzenegger Institute for State and Global Policy, founded in 2012 at the University of Southern California. It built directly on the policy agenda of his governorship, particularly in the fields of climate, energy, and political reform. But its central idea was not implementation—it was translation: taking real-world policy experience and turning it into research, education, and applied solutions.

At the core of the institute is a deliberately pragmatic approach to politics. It promotes what Schwarzenegger calls “post-partisan” thinking—an

Arnold helped put clean infrastructure on the US national agenda



attempt to move beyond ideological deadlock and focus on outcomes. In practice, this means studying how policies actually work, how they can be improved, and how different systems can learn from each other. The focus on climate and energy policy reflects the continuity of his governorship, but the method shifts toward analysis, teaching, and institutional learning.

The institute also functions as a bridge between generations. Researchers, students, and policymakers work together on issues ranging from climate governance to energy systems and democratic reform. In this way, the environmental legacy of California is not only preserved but examined, tested, and adapted for different political contexts.

Together, these efforts marked a transition—from governing within institutions to building networks between them.

### THE AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT: PLATFORM, PARTNERSHIP, AND PRACTICE

The Austrian World Summit emerged from this shift—but it is equally shaped by another trajectory.



Arnold with students at the USC  
Schwarzenegger Institute in California

© USC - Schwarzenegger Institute



© USC - Schwarzenegger Institute

For Monika Langthaler, the idea was shaped by decades of experience. As a young parliamentarian in the 1990s, she had argued for stronger environmental policies at a time when few were listening. What she encountered was not a lack of knowledge, but a lack of political priority.

Years later, the situation had changed—but a different gap remained. There was no place where solutions could be brought together and translated into action. Her collaboration with Schwarzenegger began in 2012. The idea of a summit in Vienna emerged early, but required persistence—and the right political moment.

That moment came with the election of Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen. With his support, the first Austrian World Summit took place in 2017. From the beginning, the partnership defined the structure. Schwarzenegger brought visibility and momentum. Langthaler built the system behind it—shaping its content, connecting stakeholders, and ensuring continuity.

Under the Schwarzenegger Climate Initiative, the Summit evolved into more than an annual gathering. It became the visible center of a broader ecosystem—one that operates year-round.

Each year, Vienna becomes a point of convergence. Political leaders, business representatives, scientists, and civil society come together—not to negotiate, but to connect and act. The focus is consistently on solutions. “Stop whining,” Schwarzenegger told the audience in 2025. “Get to work.”

Around him, other voices reinforce the message. John Kerry has emphasized the need for coalitions that extend beyond political boundaries, while Tony Blair has pointed to the importance of practical, results-driven approaches in climate policy. Jane Goodall, in turn, has consistently reminded audiences of the importance of never losing hope.

The Summit extends beyond the conference hall. Public formats, exhibitions, and initiatives bring climate action into the city itself. The Austrian World Summit Solutions Hub, established in 2023 in Lower Austria, serves as a platform where environmental projects are translated into tangible systems. Here, ideas move toward implementation—projects are supported, partnerships initiated, and networks strengthened. This is where Langthaler’s role becomes most tangible. She ensures continuity, connects actors, and turns momentum into structure. If Schwarzenegger draws the world to Vienna, she ensures that something remains once it leaves.

## INFLUENCE, CONTINUITY, AND SHARED IMPACT

Today, Schwarzenegger’s environmental legacy unfolds across multiple layers. In California, policies continue to shape climate action. Internationally, networks extend their logic. Through the USC In-



A strong team from the very beginning:  
M. Langthaler, A. Schwarzenegger, A. Van der Bellen



Monika joining Arnold on his daily bike ride in L.A.

stitute, this experience is analyzed and transferred. Across these layers, a consistent idea emerges: climate action works when it becomes practical. What defines Schwarzenegger's contribution is not only what he has done, but how he has framed the issue—beyond ideology, toward implementation. At the same time, this legacy depends on continuity. The Austrian World Summit—and the work behind it—ensure that connections endure. And this is where Monika Langthaler's role becomes inseparable from the story. Her trajectory reflects the longer arc of climate politics itself—from early marginalization to global relevance. The Summit exists not only because of visibility, but because of sustained effort.

## A LEGACY STILL IN MOTION

Vienna, late spring 2026. The Team of the Schwarzenegger Climate Initiative and the Hofburg prepares once again. The tenth Austrian World Summit has not yet begun. And yet, its context is already defined—less by certainty than by tension.

When the Summit was first conceived in 2017, the global framework for climate action appeared relatively stable. International agreements—from the Climate Convention to the Paris Agreement—had established a shared direction. Multilateral cooperation, though imperfect, provided a foundation.

That sense of stability has since eroded.

Today, geopolitical uncertainty, shifting alliances, and the policies of major global actors have raised new questions—about cooperation, about priorities, and, increasingly, about whether climate action can be



sustained under pressure. It is precisely this question that defines the momentum of the tenth Austrian World Summit.

And the answer, as framed by its founders, remains unequivocal: yes—more than ever.

Because beyond the political headlines, a different reality continues to unfold. The expansion of renewable energy has accelerated, driven not only by environmental concerns, but by the pursuit of independence and resilience. Electric mobility is no longer a niche, but a growing standard. Public transport systems are being strengthened, technologies are becoming more efficient, and circular economic models are moving from theory into practice.

At the same time, the economic dimension of climate action has fundamentally shifted. The environmental sector now represents investment, employment, and long-term competitiveness. Rolling back progress is no longer a neutral option—it would



carry economic consequences of its own. And perhaps most significantly, the momentum is generational.

Across countries and political systems, younger generations are not only aware of climate challenges—they are actively engaged in addressing them. What once depended on political cycles has become embedded in broader societal expectations.

This is the context in which Schwarzenegger's message has evolved. It has moved from persuasion to insistence. From explaining why action is necessary to demonstrating that it is already underway. That message has recently been carried into yet another sphere.

Recently Schwarzenegger stood alongside the Pope at a global climate conference marking ten years of *Laudato Si'*. The setting—far removed from the Hofburg—placed climate action within a broader moral framework, one that extends beyond politics and economics into questions of shared responsibility.



Arnold and Pope Leo XIV:  
a handshake for a healthy planet



Arnold stands for solar power and energy independence

© Frank Fastner

"Government alone cannot do it," Schwarzenegger said. "We need everyone to participate." It is a statement that reflects not only the scale of the challenge, but the structure that has emerged around it.

Because what takes shape in Vienna each year is not the work of one individual. "There is no such thing as a self-made man," Schwarzenegger has said. "We all have help." The Austrian World Summit embodies this idea. It is built on collaboration—between political leaders, businesses, scientists, and civil society. It depends on institutions, on continuity, and on the often invisible work that sustains it over time. This is where the dual story of this essay meets.

One path begins in Thal, shaped by ambition and outward movement.

The other in Austrian politics, shaped by persistence and long-term commitment. They converge in Vienna. And from that convergence, something has taken hold that no longer depends on a single moment, a single agreement, or a single leader. "You can't get a cause that is larger than saving the planet," Schwarzenegger said at the Austrian World Summit in 2021. The sentence does not resolve the uncertainty of the present. But it explains why the work continues. And why, despite everything, it does not stop. It is this conviction that continues to drive the Austrian World Summit—and the work behind it. Because, as the motto of the 10th Austrian World Summit makes clear: **We are unstoppable.**

# HEALTHY PL



Federal President A. Van der Bellen and Governor A. Schwarzenegger mark a decade of climate action

# 10 YEARS OF AWS

**Ten years of the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT are more than ten conferences, ten stages, ten moments in the spotlight. They are ten years of people coming together when the world could easily have drifted apart. Ten years of turning concern into commitment, frustration into momentum, and big words into visible action.**

When the first Summit opened its doors in Vienna in 2017, the mission was clear: to move from sustainable goals to real action. Climate protection was not meant to remain a distant promise, locked inside treaties, policy papers, or expert panels. It had to become something people could see, feel, join, and carry forward. From the beginning, the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT created exactly that space: a meeting point for leaders, scientists, entrepreneurs, activists, artists, young voices, and citizens who understood that protecting our planet is not the task of one government, one generation, or one sector alone.

Year after year, the Hofburg became a crossroad of climate action. A place where presidents and pioneers, CEOs and civil society, global icons and local changemakers stood side by side. Jane Goodall brought the quiet force of hope. António Guterres brought the urgency of the United Nations. Arnold Schwarzenegger brought a message that cut through politics with unmistakable clarity: clean air is not conservative or liberal. It belongs to everyone. And Austrian Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen stood with the Summit from the very beginning, giving the platform strong and steady support.

But the story of these ten years was never confined to the conference hall. It spilled out into the city. In 2019, more than 10,000 people gathered at the Climate Kirtag on Heldenplatz, a loud, colorful signal that climate action had moved into the public square. Even when the pandemic brought the world to a standstill in 2020, the Summit did not stop. It adapted, connected people across borders, and

showed that climate action could continue even in times of crisis. Over the years, the images changed, but the message grew stronger. Healthy ecosystems, clean air, renewable energy, green recovery, circular solutions, innovation, youth engagement, courage, leadership: each Summit added a new layer to a shared picture. In 2024, the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT Solutions Expo opened the doors of the Hofburg to thousands of visitors, making practical climate solutions visible, tangible, and accessible. What had started as a summit became an ecosystem.

To us "Unite in Action" means more than standing together for a photograph. It means building bridges where others draw lines. It means connecting politics with business, science with communication, local projects with global visibility, and moral responsibility with practical solutions. It means recognizing that people may come from different fields, countries, parties, industries, and generations — but still work toward the same horizon: a healthy planet and a livable future.

The following nine pages look back at moments that shaped a decade. They show handshakes, speeches, crowds, ideas, encounters, and emotions. But behind every image lies something larger: the proof that climate action is not an abstract idea. It is people meeting, listening, deciding, building, disagreeing, returning, trying again and refusing to give up.

Ten years later, the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT is not only looking back. It is moving forward with the conviction that has carried it from the start: when we unite in action, we are unstoppable!



2017



YOU DON'T NEED TO BE PERFECT. YOU JUST NEED TO START. EVERY SMALL ACTION COUNTS.

THE MOTTO

### FROM SUSTAINABLE GOALS TO REAL ACTION

The first AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT marked the beginning of a global movement for climate action. Since day one, Austrian Federal President Alexander Van der Bellen has been one of the Summit's strongest and most steadfast supporters.





THE MOTTO

## LEADERSHIP FOR A SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

The 2018 AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT built on the momentum of the first Summit and welcomed global voices including Jane Goodall and UN Secretary-General António Guterres, helping establish the event as an international platform for climate action.



# 2018



ONE PLANET.  
ONE FUTURE.  
ONE ACTION  
AT A TIME.



2019



THE MOTTO

## LESS TALK, MORE ACTION!

The 2019 AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT focused on raising awareness, inspiring solutions, and pushing decision-makers toward stronger climate action. That same year, the first Climate Kirtag at Heldenplatz welcomed more than 10,000 visitors. A powerful public call for change.





2020

THE MOTTO  
**BE PART  
 OF THE  
 SOLUTION**

Despite the challenges of the Covid-19 pandemic, the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT continued as a hybrid event, bringing people together from around the world to discuss green recovery and the opportunities of a sustainable future. Visitors also gathered once again at the Climate Kirtag to show their support for climate action.



THE FUTURE  
 BELONGS TO  
 THOSE WHO  
 KEEP GOING.





2021

THE MOTTO

## HEALTHY PLANET – HEALTHY PEOPLE

The 2021 AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT highlighted how closely human health and environmental health are connected. Focusing on solutions and successful climate projects, the Summit showed that protecting the planet also means creating healthier, more resilient communities for the future.



2022



THE MOTTO

## CREATING HOPE - INSPIRING ACTION

The 2022 AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT focused on showcasing real climate solutions and best-practice examples from around the world. For the first time, young speakers and climate entrepreneurs took center stage, highlighting how the next generation is already driving change forward.

**DREAM BIG.  
START SMALL.  
STAY CONSISTENT.  
MAKE IT COUNT.**



© Philipp Lipjarski



2023



THE MOTTO  
**WE HAVE  
THE POWER**

The 2023 AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT focused on turning momentum into real climate action and reminding people that solutions already exist. That same year, the AWS Solutions Hub opened as a year-round space for collaboration, innovation, and scalable climate solutions beyond the Summit itself.





THE MOTTO

**BE USEFUL:  
TOOLS FOR A  
HEALTHY PLANET**

The 2024 AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT brought together global leaders, innovators, and changemakers to present real tools and solutions for a healthier planet. That year also marked the debut of the AWS Solutions Expo, which welcomed thousands of visitors to the Vienna Hofburg and opened the Summit experience to the public like never before.



2024



**BIG CHANGE  
NEVER HAPPENS  
BY ACCIDENT. IT  
HAPPENS BECAUSE  
PEOPLE DON'T  
GIVE UP.**



2025



THE MOTTO

# UNITE IN ACTION - TERMINATE POLLUTION

The 2025 AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT brought together voices from politics, business, science, culture, activism, and emergency response to highlight the many different paths toward climate action. The Summit also brought the AWS community together like never before through the global Pump for the Planet campaign, showing how small actions and collective participation can create real impact.



Richard Gere spoke with us about compassion, responsibility, and the deep connection between humanity and nature. In the interview, he reflects on the Dalai Lama's message, his commitment to environmental and human rights, and what gives him hope in a divided world.

► Daniel Böhm

# ACTOR RICHARD GERE

**Q: In a world increasingly marked by polarization and short-term interests, how challenging has it become to stand firmly in defense of human dignity, nature, and future generations?** It has never been easy, and today the challenge feels even greater because fear, division, and short-term thinking have become so present in our societies. But that is precisely why it is so important that we remain united and continue to stand together. Defending human dignity, protecting nature, and thinking about future generations requires patience and perseverance. Real change requires thinking long-term. It demands courage to keep going even when progress feels slow or when the world seems overwhelmed by conflict and indifference. What gives me hope is the realization that we are not alone. Across the world, there are countless people, communities, and young generations who deeply care and who are willing to act with compassion and universal responsibility. When we reconnect with one another and with the planet, we remember that meaningful change is still possible.

**Q: In *Wisdom of Happiness*, a movie you are an executive producer of, the Dalai Lama reminds us**

**that the wellbeing of humanity and the wellbeing of nature are inseparable. What do you believe is the most urgent message the film offers to a world facing environmental and social fragmentation?** He reminds us that we are all interconnected, all part of the same reality, and that none of us can truly thrive while others suffer or while our planet is being destroyed. Compassion is not weakness; it is the foundation of both inner peace and collective peace. We often behave as though we are separate from nature, but we are not. Our wellbeing depends on the wellbeing of the Earth. His Holiness calls on all of us to recognize our responsibility to preserve and protect this fragile balance for ourselves, and for future generations who will inherit the consequences of our choices today.

**Q: Despite the many global challenges we face, what continues to give you hope? Where do you find the inner strength, clarity, and sense of responsibility to keep moving forward?** My Buddhist faith and the wisdom of my teachers are the foundations that give me the strength to continue. Through spiritual practice, I have learned that hope is a conscious decision to keep acting with compassion and responsibility, even when outcomes are uncertain. It is the understand-





© Richard Gere

© Richard Gere

ing that every positive action, no matter how small, matters. I also find strength in people — especially in those who continue to dedicate their lives to serving others, protecting nature, and defending human dignity despite enormous obstacles. Their courage is deeply inspiring. I believe that maintaining inner peace and clarity is essential if we want to contribute positively to the world around us.

**Q: You are currently shaping an ambitious conservation initiative in Mexico, deeply rooted in the wisdom and participation of local communities. What vision guides this project, and what lasting impact do you hope it will have for both people and nature?** Our vision is to bring communities, developers, investors, scientists, and government institutions together around a shared goal: creating a model of development that protects and regenerates the natural systems of an extraordinary region in CostAlegre, Jalisco, Mexico. This includes watersheds, coastal ecosystems, forests, and marine areas that are not only ecologically invaluable, but also deeply connected to the lives and traditions of local communities. We are at a crucial moment in time. We still have the possibility to protect a coastline that

preserves extraordinary biodiversity, relatively balanced population levels, and vast areas of wilderness that are increasingly rare in the world today. Climate change and biodiversity loss are already threatening the very systems that sustain life on Earth. This initiative is ultimately about creating a different path forward — one based on balance, regeneration, and long-term responsibility rather than extraction and short-term profit. We hope the project can become an example of how human development and environmental protection can coexist in harmony, while also honoring the wisdom, participation, and dignity of local and indigenous communities. The responsibility to shape this new future belongs to all of us. Sierra A Mar is not simply a conservation project; it is a call to imagine and build a healthier relationship between humanity and the natural world.

**Q: At this stage of your journey, what personal aspirations or missions still inspire you most deeply? What would you still like to contribute to the world in the years ahead?** More than individual achievements, what inspires me is the possibility of contributing to lasting change in the way we relate to one another and to the planet. My mission is rooted in compassion and community. Whether standing for the rights of displaced people, advocating for the voiceless, regenerating ecosystems, or elevating timeless wisdom, I am guided by one principle: We are in this together. All of us. Through The Gere Foundation, my wife Alejandra and I collaborate with initiatives that reflect this spirit. There are several missions that feel especially urgent to me. One is helping shape a more human, compassionate perspective on migration, recognizing the dignity and humanity of every person forced to leave their home in search of safety or opportunity. Another is addressing homelessness, which I believe is one of the greatest moral failures of modern societies. No human being should feel invisible or abandoned. I am also profoundly committed to preserving indigenous people culture and values and learning from their wisdom. For centuries, many indigenous communities have preserved a deep understanding of balance, respect for nature, and interconnectedness — values that modern societies have too often ignored or lost. At this stage of my life, what matters most to me is helping plant seeds for a more compassionate, conscious, and sustainable future — one that future generations can continue to nurture and grow.

PUMP FOR THE PLANET



# JOIN THE WORKOUT *FOR A* *HEALTHIER PLANET*

Arnold Schwarzenegger has been pumping iron for decades. Three years ago, he decided to design a different kind of training plan — one for the environment. No protein shakes, no mirrors, no ego lifts. Just seven weeks, seven habits, and one very simple idea: if you can build a body one rep at a time, you can build a healthier planet the same way. That is the whole ethos of Pump for the Planet. ▶ By Melanie Guadalupe

**YOU DO NOT FLIP A SWITCH** and fix the climate. You show up on a Monday, choose one small habit, and carry it into Tuesday. Then you add another. And another. You rethink what you buy, how you move, what you eat, how you dress, how you use energy, and how you build community. The workout is cumulative, just like the real thing. Progress compounds. **But Pump for the Planet is more than a campaign. It is a movement.**

It is a way for people to take action without waiting for permission. It is a platform for people, creators, cities, schools, companies and initiatives, and communities that are already building solutions. And now, with the new PUMP FOR THE PLANET newsletter by the Schwarzenegger Climate Initiative, it is also becoming a year-round space for ideas, inspiration, practical tips, and stories that deserve a bigger spotlight. Because climate action does not only happen

on conference stages. It happens in kitchens, bike lanes, offices, classrooms, neighborhoods, and group chats. It happens when people make better choices easier, cooler, tastier, more visible, and more fun.

### THAT IS WHY PUMP FOR THE PLANET IS BUILT AROUND SEVEN SIMPLE THEMES:

- **Less, But Better.** Buy less. Choose well. Make what you own count.
- **Move Different.** Rethink the short trip. Walk, cycle, share, ride.
- **Eat The Change.** Put better choices on the table.
- **Style Without The Pile.** Dress smarter.
- **Power Down.** Cut the energy you do not need and support the energy we do.
- **Community Counts.** Bring others with you. No one pumps alone.
- **We Are Unstoppable.** Turn small habits into a movement.

One of the latest examples is our collaboration with Veganista. For the AUSTRIAN WORLD SUMMIT, the popular Viennese vegan ice cream shop developed four special flavors inspired by the motto WE ARE UNSTOPPABLE. It shows exactly what Pump for the Planet can be: not a lecture, not a guilt trip, but a joyful invitation. A climate habit people can experience, share, recommend, and remember. That is the power of this platform. Pump for the Planet can turn a good idea into a public moment. It can give companies and initiatives a stage. It connects a growing community.



#### INFOBOX

**JOIN THE PUMP!**

Join Pump for the Planet now and turn every small habit into climate action!

And it can show that sustainability is not one single lane — it is food, mobility, fashion, energy, consumption, creativity, communication, and collaboration. The new newsletter is the next step in making that community stronger.

It brings together people who want to act, partners who want to collaborate, and initiatives that deserve attention. It shares hopeful stories, useful ideas, and concrete steps. It helps turn a seven-week campaign into a year-round rhythm — a place where people do not just read about climate action, but find ways to join it. One person changing one habit is a ripple. A community doing it together is a wave. And when thousands of people, partners, and ideas move in the same direction, that wave becomes impossible to ignore. So join our workout. Bring your idea. Share your solution. Partner with us. Subscribe. Take one habit and make it stronger. Then bring someone with you. Because progress compounds. Movements grow. And the heaviest weight on the rack is still in front of us. We are still lifting. And we are just getting started.

**UNTIL THEN, KEEP PUMPING.  
WE ARE UNSTOPPABLE.**

Federica Brignone knows what it means to be unstoppable: as a World Cup champion, comeback fighter and voice for the mountains. In this interview, she speaks about resilience, shrinking glaciers, the future of skiing and why small actions can make a big difference.

► By Daniel Böhm

# SKI RACER FEDERICA BRIGNONE



**Q: This year's motto of our environmental conference is "We are unstoppable." That also reflects your career and your comeback. What made you so strong and determined not to give up, even after major setbacks?** Well, thank you! What helped me not give up was my motivation, which made me strong during a really difficult time. The idea of facing what seemed like an impossible challenge pushed me even further.

**Q: You travel all around the world – where do you feel most at home in nature, and what gives you strength?** I feel at home in the Aosta Valley – especially Courmayeur – where I've lived since I was a child. Walking in the mountains or skiing there is how I recharge. Otherwise, I also feel at home in the water, I love it!

**Q: You experience firsthand how many glaciers are shrinking year by year. In this context, how do**

**you see the future of skiing in Europe?** Glaciers have definitely changed a lot since I was a teenager. You go skiing somewhere one year, and the next you can't ski there anymore, it's alarming. During the winter, more and more artificial snow is needed each year. Through my environmental sustainability project "Traiettorie Liquide" ([www.traiettorieliquide.it](http://www.traiettorieliquide.it)) I've been running public awareness campaigns – since 2017 – on issues related to environmental protection, from melting glaciers to water pollution in all its forms and deforestation, stressing the importance of using natural and sustainable resources in pursuit of decarbonising consumption. I'm the voice of "Traiettorie Liquide"; My managers, Giulia and Daniela Mancini are the soul of the project, together with the photographer Giuseppe La Spada. One of the topics we have covered ("Quarta Traiettoria") addresses the dramatic decline of glaciers due to rising temperatures caused by greenhouse gases, as well as the "darkening" effect resulting



© Giuseppe La Spada



© Federica Brignone

from industrial pollution, wildfire soot, debris, dust and plastic.

**Q: How much climate and environmental protection is realistically possible in today's Ski World Cup, and where do you see the main challenges?** There is a lot of work being done when it comes to climate and environmental protection, and many things have improved since I started competing in the World Cup. For example, there is more attention on energy use, travel, and how events are organized. However, the calendar could still be better. We often travel long distances in a short time, which is not ideal. At the same time, it's difficult to change because each host venue wants a specific period of the year.

**Q: Which environmental initiatives in recent years within the ski world have given you the most hope—especially regarding the future of the sport?** The environmental initiatives that give me the most hope

are the use of hydropower and other sustainable energy sources to produce snow and run ski resorts. It's a big step forward, because energy use is one of the main impacts of our sport, and seeing resorts move in a more sustainable direction is really encouraging.

**Q: This winter, the International Ski and Snowboard Federation and the Schwarzenegger Climate Initiative also set a strong example with the #KeepWinterAlive campaign. How important are initiatives like this to you personally?** I think initiatives like these are really important because they raise awareness. It's great to see this kind of commitment, and we need to keep moving forward in this direction. In general, I think we should all reflect on our daily habits and consider the small actions we could incorporate to be more environmentally sustainable. It's all about small gestures that can make a big difference without completely changing our lives.

**Q: What are your next personal goals and challenges?** Right now, my main priority is to stay healthy, especially when it comes to my leg and my overall physical condition. I've pushed myself a lot, and this injury isn't something that will improve on its own. I know I'll have to keep working on it for the rest of my life if I want to continue with the sport and the life I love.

## INFOBOX

## TRAIETTORIE LIQUIDE

Traiettorie Liquide is Federica Brignone's environmental sustainability project. Through powerful visual narratives created with artist Giuseppe La Spada, the Olympic champion raises awareness of water pollution, glacier loss, decarbonization and deforestation. Across six "liquid trajectories," the project combines sport, art and activism to inspire greater responsibility for the planet.

[www.traiettorieliquide.it](http://www.traiettorieliquide.it)



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# THE WORLD STILL RUNS ON OIL – BUT THE SYSTEM IS BEGINNING TO CRACK

**Supply chain chaos, soaring prices, empty shelves—what’s behind it all? The answer is usually the same: crude oil. But increasingly, these disruptions point to something deeper: a structural shift in the global energy system.** ▶ By Daniel Böhm

**IN 2021**, when the massive container ship Ever Given blocked the Suez Canal for six days, goods worth \$9.6 billion per day were brought to a standstill. Televisions, medicines, food: everything was waiting. The real problem wasn’t the ship itself, but what it revealed: a global economy that depends on cheap oil—efficient, but highly fragile. For decades, this fossil-based system has dominated. It enabled growth and globalization, but it is also vulnerable to crises, tightly linked to geopolitical tensions, and often concentrates economic benefits in relatively few hands. These weaknesses have become increasingly visible in recent years, as

energy prices fluctuate sharply and supply security turns into a political priority. Oil is no longer just fuel at the pump. It’s in fertilizers, plastics, transport systems, and industrial production. Around 10% of global oil output goes directly into synthetic fertilizers. That means: when oil markets shake, food systems follow.

## WHEN GEOPOLITICS HITS THE DINNER TABLE

Every escalation around Iran reverberates through global markets. Roughly one-fifth of the world’s oil

passes through the Strait of Hormuz. If prices rise there, they cascade: higher oil prices drive up gas prices, which increase fertilizer costs, which reduce yields and ultimately make bread more expensive. What happens in the Middle East ends up on our plates.

### **NO PLASTIC, NO CARS: COVID MADE IT CLEAR**

When the global economy restarted after COVID in 2021, raw material prices surged. Suddenly, plastic components were missing. Wolfsburg slowed down, and Volkswagen put workers on reduced hours. More than 6,000 everyday products rely on petrochemicals, from toothbrushes to pharmaceutical capsules. The system works but only as long as everything runs smoothly. 95% of global goods are transported using fossil fuels. A single shipment from Shanghai to Hamburg consumes as much heavy fuel oil as 50 million car kilometers. Efficiency has come at the cost of resilience.

### **CRACKS IN THE SYSTEM AND NEW SOLUTIONS**

At the same time, a different energy model is gaining ground. Renewable energy sources are more decentralized, more widely available, and increasingly cost-effective. Unlike fossil fuels, which are concentrated in specific regions, solar and wind power can be used everywhere around the world. This opens up new economic opportunities and allows households, communities, and smaller businesses to participate directly in energy production. This shift is already stabilizing markets. Unlike in 2022, recent crises have not automatically led to extreme electricity price spikes in many regions. Expanding renewables



reduces dependence on fossil imports and dampens volatility. For many observers, this is a sign that the fossil system is beginning to lose its dominance.

### **LOCAL SOLUTIONS, GLOBAL IMPACT**

Austria's energy transition is already happening locally. Since energy communities were introduced in 2021, they have grown rapidly: by the end of 2025, Austria had 5,590 renewable energy communities, around 1,000 citizen energy communities, and about 5,000 shared generation facilities. Together, they produce and share clean power locally, reduce dependence on volatile energy markets, and help relieve the grid. Similar changes are happening in other fields: bioplastics made from renewable materials are beginning to replace petroleum-based inputs, 3D printing shortens supply chains by enabling local, on-demand production, and precision agriculture reduces fertilizer use through targeted, data-driven application. Together, these innovations not only cut resource consumption and emissions, but also make production systems more flexible and less vulnerable to global disruptions. The market for new food solutions is booming. Plant-based and resource-efficient nutrition concepts are gaining ground fast. One example, already popular among athletes, is Sun Minimeal. It offers nutrient-rich, healthy, plant-based nutrition for active lifestyles, demanding workdays, and physical performance. Eating more plants and less meat is a simple step with a big impact. It saves land, water and energy, and helps us move away from systems built on oil.

### **▲ SHIFT IN PERSPECTIVE**

Public perception is changing as well. Dependence on fossil fuels is increasingly seen as a risk – economically, politically, and environmentally. The demand for a cleaner, more stable, and more independent energy future is growing.

### **LOCAL POWER, GLOBAL IMPACT**

Fossil fuels have driven progress for decades. But their limits are becoming visible. What we are seeing now is not an abrupt end, but a gradual shift toward a more resilient, decentralized, and inclusive system. The technologies are already in place. What matters now is how decisively this transition is shaped.

# LONG LIVE **FASHION**

**Fashion is culture, craft, and self-expression. It is also a climate problem. The way forward isn't found in abstinence alone, but in a calculation that brings together awareness, responsibility, CO<sub>2</sub> savings, and joy.**

► By Rosa Hauser



Barbara Meier wearing a piece from her Eco Dirndl collection

**BEFORE** a garment hangs in a closet, it has a long story behind it. Once it was a plant in a field: cotton, linen, flax. Or an animal in a pasture: sheep, goat, silkworm. It has passed through many hands, through spinning, weaving, dyeing, cutting, and sewing. It carries traces of weather and knowledge, of craft passed down across generations, and of an identity that finds its expression in what we wear.

Fashion, then, is never merely merchandise. In every region of the world it tells a different story: from the Japanese kimono to the Scottish tartan to the Indian sari. In Austria, the roots run deep. Flax has been cultivated on the rugged granite soils of the Muehlviertel region of Upper Austria since the 13th century. The cool nights make the fibers particularly strong, and the linen woven from them was sought after for centuries, as far as Italy and Hungary. Then there is Alpine Loden, that dense woolen cloth whose making has been handed down through generations, alongside roughly 150,000 craft businesses employing some 600,000 artisans who shape the country to this day. Traditional Trachten from the Bregenzerwald

in the west to the Salzkammergut lake district in the east, tailoring houses in Vienna, leather workshops and tanneries in Tyrol. Each piece carries the marks of a region and a shared identity.

Whoever sees fashion in this depth treats it differently. A garment born of soil, animal, creativity, and skill is not discarded after three seasons. It is worn, repaired, passed on. And above all, the next one is chosen with greater care.

## THE TRUE PRICE OF A GARMENT

Yet this is precisely the awareness today's fashion industry has largely lost. According to an EU report, the textile sector accounts for around ten percent of global CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, more than all international air and shipping traffic combined. A single cotton T-shirt requires roughly 2,700 liters of water to produce. And since the turn of the millennium, the average number of times a garment is worn has fallen by around 36 percent worldwide. We buy more and keep them



Textile waste is piling up around the world



Fast Fashion accounts for around 10% of greenhouse gases

shorter. The economic tool that corrects this imbalance bears an unspectacular name: cost-per-wear, the cost per single use. The formula could not be simpler. The purchase price divided by the number of days the garment is actually worn.

A real-world example. A well-made woolen coat costs 400 euros. Worn for ten winters, on 40 days each, it comes to one euro per wear. A fast-fashion equivalent at 50 euros, which loses its shape after two seasons and survives perhaps 25 wears, costs two euros per wear. The supposedly expensive coat turns out to be cheaper and ecologically superior: it binds resources once instead of repeatedly.

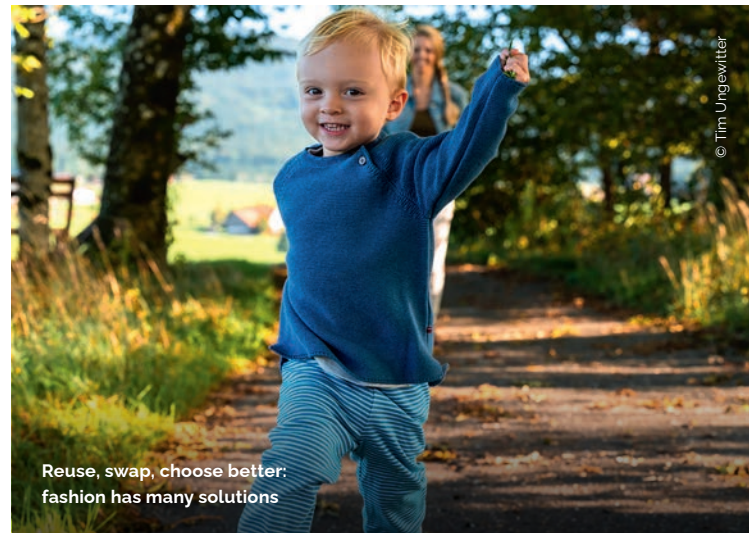
This calculation is more than a thought experiment. A study by the British sustainability organization WRAP shows that extending the average lifespan of a garment by just nine months would reduce its CO<sub>2</sub>, water, and waste footprint by 20 to 30 percent. The average lifespan of a garment today stands at only around 2.2 years, a figure that would have struck two generations ago as a joke.

### THE MOST SUSTAINABLE FASHION IS ALREADY IN YOUR CLOSET

Equally remarkable is how little we wear of what we already own. Studies across several European countries consistently show that around 30 percent of the clothing in an average household has not been worn in over a year. The most sustainable garment, in other words, often hangs in our own closet. We just don't wear it. Everyone who takes cost-per-wear seriously buys differently. Not more expensively for its own sake, but more thoughtfully. The questions before a purchase shift: Will I still wear this in five years? Will the material withstand regular use? Can it be repaired? Does it pair with at least five other pieces in my closet? And above all: Does it bring me

enough joy to deserve a place in my life? That leaves the most common objection: isn't long-lasting fashion a question of budget? Not necessarily. Cost-per-wear is first of all a stance, not a question of means. The growing secondhand market, which according to market analyses is set to overtake fast fashion by the end of this decade, opens up precisely those quality segments that many would never buy new. Repair cafés, small tailoring shops, and rental models for special occasions complete the picture of change.

Fashion, then, doesn't need to become less. It needs to become more considered. Whoever chooses a piece they truly value keeps it longer. Whoever wears longer buys less often. Whoever buys less often relieves the climate. Less wasted resources, with no loss of joy. Often, in fact, more.



Reuse, swap, choose better: fashion has many solutions

### FASHION SHOULD ENDURE

It was never disposable, and it isn't today. It is cultural heritage, craft, self-expression, and community. A living fabric of stories, materials, and people, reinterpreted in every generation and handed on to the next. From Kimono to Tracht, from the bespoke suit to a favorite pair of jeans: what we wear tells us who we are and where we come from. Conscious consumption is not a rejection of fashion. It is its highest form of appreciation. So: long live fashion, and above all those pieces that truly mean something to us. Not only to protect the climate, but out of conviction, out of respect for the generations before us, and out of responsibility for those still to come.

# 3 YEARS AWS SOLUTIONS HUB

## Where climate action becomes reality ▶ Julia Eckner

**TEN YEARS AGO**, the Austrian World Summit was founded to make solutions visible. But visibility alone is not enough. For the past three years, there has been a place where ideas turn into reality: the AWS Solutions Hub. On a former farmstead just 45 minutes outside of Vienna, something more than a project has emerged. It is proof that climate action doesn't have to remain theoretical. It begins the moment someone takes the first step. This is not about big announcements, but about what follows: implementing, testing, improving, moving forward every day.

### ENERGY FOR THE REGION

In 2024, the Hub faced an important question: what kind of system should power the eco-hub? Fortunately, at the same time, Raiffeisen Holding had decided to make a major commitment to renewable energy and was also looking for a partner. Together, the first step was to implement a modern renewable energy management system at the AWS Solutions Hub, including a photovoltaic system, battery storage, and an e-charging station. This system became the starting point for a renewable energy community together with the local Raiffeisenbank Mistelbach. From there, many more such systems and energy communities followed. Today, more than 10,000 people are part of the Raiffeisen Energy World in a renewable citizen energy community. True to the spirit of the AWS Solutions Hub: Dream big. Start small. Stay consistent. Make it count.

### WHEN NATURE RETURNS

In 2025, we teamed up with local partners to turn an idea into a living habitat. The "Wild Solutions Park" combines research and education to demonstrate real impact. Large grazers, robust cattle, water buffalo, wild donkeys, and horses maintain ecological bal-



Arnold Schwarzenegger opens the AWS Solutions Hub in 2023

ance. Their movement creates open spaces, shelter, and biodiversity. Formerly intensively used land is gradually coming back to life; species return, cycles are restored. The park shows how nature can recover and how such models can be replicated elsewhere. In 2026, the focus also includes the next generation. Together with local schools, the Hub engages children and young people through hands-on learning. They explore food systems and global environmental issues while developing teamwork, responsibility, and a connection to nature. The Hub also serves as a regional knowledge center, bringing people together through workshops and community formats.

### ENABLING THE FUTURE

The site itself continues to grow into a true center for practical solutions. A former grain storage building is now a space for ideas, with offices and event areas for start-ups, organizations, and companies working on rural innovation. The Hub also serves as a regional knowledge center, bringing people together through workshops and community formats. Three years of the AWS Solutions Hub show what is possible when ideas are not only discussed, but tested, built, and improved on site. Step by step, the Hub is becoming a place where small, practical solutions can grow into models that others can scale and replicate. Together we are unstoppable!

# THANKS TO OUR **PARTNERS:**

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# Zukunft statt Klimakrise

Die Klimakrise ist längst keine ferne Bedrohung mehr – sie ist Realität, spürbar in schmelzenden Gletschern, brennenden Wäldern und immer extremeren Wetterereignissen. Doch genau in dieser Dringlichkeit liegt auch unsere größte Chance: Die Zukunft neu zu gestalten, bevor es zu spät ist. Wenn Politik, Wirtschaft und jeder Einzelne entschlossen handeln, können wir den Kurs noch ändern – hin zu einer Welt, die von erneuerbaren Energien, nachhaltigem Fortschritt und Verantwortung geprägt ist.

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