

**Check upon delivery**



## **Award Ceremony Remarks**

**Monique Barbut, CEO and Chairperson  
Global Environment Facility**

**South Africa Clean Tech Competition Awards Ceremony  
Gala Dinner  
8 December 2011**

*(The CEO will be introduced by the Master of Ceremony and is the first speaker of the night)*

Thank you for the kind introduction.

It is such a pleasure for me to be here tonight with good friends and leaders.

Minister Molewa

Minister Peters

Minister Davis

Director General Yumkella

You are truly making a difference and I'm proud to share tonight with you.

This event-this celebration and awards for the South Africa Clean Tech Competition is quite unique for us. Don't get me wrong, we have been to many many dinners and receptions!

But for the Global Environment Facility, to be able to stand here and acknowledge the vibrant community of innovators and entrepreneurs in

South Africa is really special. As you know, most of the time our job is quite predictable—we sit in Washington, D.C, reading project proposals, pushing paper from one side of the office to the other!

But this time was different. When we had the chance to work with the Minister to help make this conference in Durban a greener, more sustainable event, we tried something new. We worked with UNIDO and the Minister to launch this approach to support innovation and entrepreneurship in clean technologies.

Why did we do this? To answer, let me tell you about the word entrepreneur. It is a French word, taken from a Latin root, which means to discover, to perceive, to understand. As used in French, it literally meant “one who undertakes a task.” Around 1875, a French economist Jean-Baptiste Say began using the word as we understand it today to refer to those who start and manage enterprises. Why did he need such a word? Because at that time the world was changing—industrial revolutions, political revolutions, and social upheaval. Everywhere, there were problems to be solved, and people were coming forward to help solve them. So the French had to give them a

name! These people who come forward to solve our problems are the entrepreneurs.

So by definition, entrepreneurs emerge when society most needs them. They have the unique ability to see opportunities where others do not, and then they organize themselves to take advantage of them. They have initiative, they take risk, and they make things happen.

So do we need problem-solvers today? Yes of course we do. This whole two weeks of effort here in Durban is to recognize and deal with the problems of climate change. You know as well as I the signs – rising temperatures, rising seas, severe weather, erratic rainfall. Our environment is in upheaval and that has created a host of problems to be solved.

Some may ask, won't the climate negotiations create the roadmap to solve our problems? Do we really need entrepreneurs? Of course this is just backwards. Entrepreneurs are a necessity; negotiators are an accessory! If the negotiations make progress, that is good. If not, you can be sure we will come again next year and try again.

But if you fail, then we are lost. We need renewable energy. You must do it. We need green buildings. You must do it. We need energy efficiency in our homes, our industries, even everyday products like phones and light-bulbs! You must do it. We need technologies for adaptation. We need new business models so companies can make more money by saving the world than by destroying it. You must do it.

And you can do it. You are doing it. That is why we are here tonight. We are celebrating the first—but only just the first—wave of innovators and entrepreneurs in South Africa who are going to help save the world.

Based on your hard work and the leadership of our South African colleagues, the GEF is soon going to explore more Clean Tech competitions in other countries. So we thank you for your leadership and your initiative.

Let me conclude because we are all anxious to hear from the finalists tonight—to learn about you and your dreams. You are already an inspiration to us because you have undertaken the task. You are all entrepreneurs. Bonne chance, good luck, and thank you.