

Planetary Skin: Podcast with Simon Willis, Vice President of Cisco's Internet Business Solutions Group, Public Sector (March, 2009)

Simon Willis: Good morning. My name is Simon Willis, and I'm the Vice President for Public Sector in Cisco's Internet Business Solutions Group (IBSG), which is our global strategic consulting arm.

Today, we are announcing a remarkable partnership between NASA and Cisco, being led by IBSG in this case, to develop and prototype and roll out the global monitoring system to look at environmental conditions around the world, with a particular focus on carbon and climate change.

Cisco's made a very, very strong commitment in the area of climate change and the environment more generally, and there are a couple of very good business reasons why we've done that.

The Company, as you may know, has made a commitment to reduce its own carbon footprint by 25 percent before 2012, so that's a -- that is a pretty tough commitment to bite off into, but we believe that we're capable of doing it.

We're currently cutting down rainforests at the rate of about one England per year, and it's speeding up. And this process is contributing -- it's probably the second-largest contributor to global greenhouse gasses.

The reason that we're starting with rainforests is kind of two-fold. Firstly, it is technically easier than doing this same job in a semi-urban or urban environments, which we do plan to do as well, but we believe it's going to be an easier nut to crack to look at the rainforests.

But there's another very powerful reason for starting there, and that is because probably the most urgent task facing us globally at the moment -- when looking at how to tackle climate change -- is to reverse the incredible decline in rainforests.

And basically, rainforests have a huge benefit to the globe in that they capture and store carbon. So as you burn them down and destroy them, it has the double effect of both putting more carbon into the atmosphere, speeding up the process of climate change, and also removing that kind of sink effect that the rainforests have been performing for us.

It's a really important point to understand that this vital task, as with many in the area of climate change, is not actually inconsistent with tackling the huge economic problems that we have presently around the world; in fact, on the contrary.

And some modeling work and economic analysis that we've done suggests that between 2010 and 2020, you have the potential here to unlock upwards of 400 billion US dollars per annum in funding flows, which has a further positive effect on GDP growth of

possibly up to one percent. That, in turn, in a slack employment market as we have at the present time could have, you know, a similar size of effect on employment.

So how Planetary Skin is going to work is basically by stitching together a vast array of sensors, many of them satellite-based, but also airborne sensors and ground sensors, and feeding in these multiple sources of information, which tracking, as I said, in real-time the amount of carbon stocks and the amount of carbon flows and putting them all together on a -- and presenting the information in a consistent basis, analyzing it, inferring from it what the sum total is, and then presenting all of that data in a usable format for companies, for governments, for decision-makers at the international level to be able to get access to it and make better-informed decisions about climate change and about the development of a decarbonized economy.

Thanks very much for spending time with me today, and we look forward very much to hearing from organizations, both public and private, who would be interested in partnering with us to tackle this fundamentally important issue of climate change.

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