



Understanding and mastering global transformation processes

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Dear Stakeholders,

The current global financial and economic crisis calls on governments, political circles, society at large and industry players to fundamentally review the way they think and act. This is reflected in the G20 agenda. Typically concentrated on international financial reforms and multi-billion recovery packages launched in several countries, the world's major economies from both the industrialised and emerging world are now also turning their attention to wider strategic topics. These include ways of protecting consumers through information transparency, combating tax havens and money laundering more effectively and including largely sidelined, non-G20 nations who have been worst hit by the recession into the crisis management process. In an increasingly networked world, it has become virtually impossible to divorce the welfare and security issues facing industrialised nations from the economic and political realities of emerging and developing economies.

For us, as for many other global organisations, this means constantly raising the bar – not just for employee excellence, but also for process quality. We are challenged to increase productivity against stiff international competition and expand our leading position in up-and-coming markets without incurring unreasonable business risks – as might be the case in emerging economies that lack political stability. We are called upon to support our customers worldwide in the drive to cut energy consumption, emissions and costs. The market also expects us to partner and innovate the energy delivery chain, delivering solutions – also for mobility – with a minimal environmental footprint.

We can only achieve this if we actively live our value system, strictly adhere to our business codex and constantly prove our ability to master global change processes as a unit.

One of the biggest challenges we face today is the rapid swell in the world's population, concentrated in developing and emerging economies. The under-18 population is currently estimated at 2.2 billion and 1.9 billion of those youths currently live in developing and emerging countries. These regions will face spiralling demand across the board – for education, childcare, healthcare and energy – to mention but a few.

But the demographic trends are anything but uniform. While the population in developing and emerging economies continues to swell, Europe and Japan will see a marked drop in birth rates. In addition, the population in these regions will age significantly. This trend will have a marked impact on our socio-economic system – and thus on our company – over the company decades. We are pre-empting this shift with a variety of action plans and have strengthened our pension scheme with a demographics fund, for example.

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The two global megatrends climate change and energy demand are already firmly rooted in our corporate strategy. We are pre-empting the inevitable shortage of fossil fuels with a forward-looking strategy based on intelligent solutions. The key to energy security as we move forward can only lie in diversifying the energy mix and deploying new technologies. Hydrogen is a perfect example of this diversification. Not only are we actively involved in the development of future-proof, environmentally sound technologies, we are also constantly working to maximise energy efficiency across our own process landscape.

The process of global climate change is closely linked to the energy question. Over the next few years, we aim to dramatically cut emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases in order to mitigate the effects of climate change. Our mission is to do everything in our power to develop products and technologies that underpin our position as a leading, responsible company with its sights firmly set on sustainable growth.

To deliver on this mission, we have committed to the ten principles of the UN Global Compact in the areas of human rights, labour, environment and anti-corruption.

Entitled "Shaping Responsibility", our Corporate Responsibility Report 2009 is only available online. On this microsite you can see how we are stepping up to employee responsibilities, corporate citizenship, climate change and environmental protection. You will discover present concrete positions in a time of flux.

Best wishes

Professor Dr. Wolfgang Reitzle
Chief Executive Officer of Linde AG

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