Good morning Ms. Van Rooy, Dr. Pachauri, Professor Van der Zwaan, and especially Professor Kumar - holder of the Prince Claus Chair on Development and Equity, Professor Cramer, ladies and gentlemen. I am happy to be with you for this gathering.

Knowledge, business ideas and inclusive finance all have an important role in sustainable development. When we put them together in the right way, they can be so powerful.

Some of us come to the conversation of sustainable development through a passion for a particular issue, be it water for my husband or, for me, giving people the right financial tools so that they can make their own livelihoods sustainable. Others come to it from a business opportunity, such as renewable energy. What we all share is a common interest in social welfare and the environment. We want to consider our business ventures in light of these broader goals. This means improving lives and affirming human dignity. For sustainable development, it is about people, planet and profit altogether.

This is all very logical in the long term. But in the short term, trade-offs must sometimes be considered. What is good for one goal might not always be immediately good for another. For example, as countries grow economically, they become more industrialized and urbanized.

But this can bring negative consequences, such as over-crowding and respiratory illness due to pollution and contaminated drinking water.

What about in the rural areas, where 70% of the world's poor people live? If we want these people to be better off, that will mean more cows, pigs and chickens. But more animals means more use of water and, possibly, more air, land and water degradation. Already, methane, nitrous oxide and carbon dioxide from livestock production account for 18% of manmade greenhouse gas emissions. Long term this will negatively impact their livelihood.

And just to state Professor Kumar's findings, we also know that no country has reduced poverty without massively increasing its use of energy - with the obvious negative consequences this has on the environment.

So, how to balance this? The good news is that there are win-win approaches. And businesses are often at the forefront of identifying these solutions.

Let us consider energy. We take this for granted - the light switch in your house, the ATM for cash, the microphone I am using. But two out of every five people in the world have unreliable supply or no electricity at all. Creating energy grids to reach all rural and urban areas is expensive and collecting user fees can be difficult.

So what is to be done? That is where the ingenuity and social commitment of businesses and public-private partnership come in. Solar cells. Energy from biomass such as corn husks and weeds. I recently heard about an innovative company called Emergence BioEnergy. The idea is: with a microloan, a cattle farmer in Bangladesh operates a small generator in his house using methane from cow manure. He gets electricity for himself, but he can also sell surplus electricity to his neighbours. This provides an extra source of income.

These approaches are proving successful because they respond to people's needs. Since my husband became Chairman of the UN Secretary-General's Advisory Board on Water and Sanitation, he has received many water purification systems. But most of these are too expensive for poor people or are given for free without good product distribution.

The market is an honest judge. Businesses that do not provide something useful, affordable and convenient do
not last. I believe this is something we must all bear in mind as we think about sustainability.

And this is where financial inclusion plays a role. We cannot provide drinking water, but we can design the right financial product that makes clean water affordable. Or the right financial service that allows you to save for older days. Or to insure your family against illness and unforeseen risks. Or make investments. We can also use financial networks to distribute new goods that cover your basic needs, be it solar panels, water filtering, rain catching systems or even more important, knowledge. Just like with any good business, providing the right product, at the right price and in the right place is at the heart of financial services for the poor. But still today, more than 2.7 billion people and 400 million small and medium-sized enterprises around the world do not have access to any of the financial services that you and I rely on every day.

Everywhere, SMEs are the biggest creators of jobs. For example, I was just in Mexico. There micro and SMEs contribute 52% of GDP. But, in low-income countries, only 18% of SMEs have access to credit lines, payment systems, current accounts, and so on.

Imagine if we could change this situation. We must also consider what a client does with financial products. A client may use a loan to buy a chain saw and cut down the whole forest. Or, install water-saving drip irrigation or buy a solar-powered sewing machine to start a new tailoring venture. Multiply this by every small business loan and the impact can be huge.

Similarly, we see the impact that financial services can have on whole families. A farmer might invest some of his savings in the community latrine. Improvements in sanitation can lead to an almost 40% reduction in illnesses caused by diarrhea. That means that people can work more and spend less on emergency healthcare.

But before we can make that happen, we urgently need to connect people with national financial networks so that they can make use of savings, credit, insurance, payments, pensions and more. We need to build the financial infrastructure.

Once we have done that, why not go one step farther? For example, why not provide technical assistance with a loan to expand a small factory and reduce its use of water and pollution at the same time?

We see promising examples everywhere, but they are not yet common place. Moreover, it is important that we deliver the right product. How many times have I seen long-term investments financed by repeated, six-week loans? Or an emergency loan to buy medicine when a savings account or insurance would have been better?

Providing financial products that add real value to customers in a transparent way and at a reasonable cost is at the core of financial inclusion. And this is not only in the developing world, ladies and gentlemen. It is here in the Netherlands, next door in Germany and around the world.

Increasing access to financial services is one way we can help advance sustainable development and growth, as it will make it possible. Another, just as important, is to share knowledge. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution, sharing best practices can help us avoid having to reinvent the wheel each time. Knowledge also means in-depth, comparable data and analysis of gaps and progress. These are essential to effective policy design and investment.

For this reason, I am so pleased that today we are opening the office of The Energy and Resources Institute-TERI-in Utrecht. This is a wonderful example of rich global cross-fertilization and sharing of ideas from so many places that will help us change the world.

In closing, financial services are not an end in themselves. They are means to cover basic needs, to meet aspirations and to help individuals take care of themselves and their families. Financial services can foster thriving enterprises and protect the environment at the same time. All we have to do is study the local needs of people and engineer a combination of product technology and financial technology that suits them best. In that, creating innovative financial sectors where everybody has access will be imperative.
It is challenging, but I wonder if we have an option not to do so. I wish you productive and enriching discussions today.