

**SHELL CENTER FOR SUSTAINABILITY
INAUGURAL CONFERENCE
MARCH 12-13, 2003
RICE UNIVERSITY, HOUSTON, TEXAS**

Opening Remarks

**Christian R. Holmes, Executive Director,
Shell Center for Sustainability, Rice University**

It is indeed a privilege to welcome you to the inauguration of the Shell Center for Sustainability. This is an exciting day. It is the start of a great adventure, and I hope that you will become our partners as we commence this adventure.

Today is an opportunity to celebrate the creation the Center. It is also an important opportunity -- especially given the extraordinary expertise of the 500 conference registrants -- to begin developing a plan of action for the Center.

Our registrants represent ten different countries from around the world; twelve states within the United States; and twenty-three cities within Texas. Representatives come from Armenia, France, Japan, Mexico, the Netherlands, Oman, Paraguay, Poland, the United Kingdom and the United States. We wish to thank you all for your interest and participation.

I should note that one our plenary speakers, Mr. Watanabe from Toyota, has arrived from Japan today, and due to the press of business, will have to return to Japan today. Mr. Watanabe, your commitment to this conference reflects the collective passion of all the conference attendees for a sustainable future.

We are also fortunate to have individuals representing so many sectors: academia, business, and non-governmental organizations. These leaders have made significant impacts in the core elements of sustainable development --environmental protection, the care of our communities, economic growth.

In this regard, we would like to express our gratitude to two individuals for their contribution to the establishment of the Center. One is Dr. Malcolm Gillis, President of Rice University. Dr. Gillis is also a distinguished scholar in the field of international economic development and sustainable development.

The other is Sir Philip Watts. Sir Philip is the Chairman of the Board of Managing Directors of the Royal/Dutch Shell Group. He is also Chairman of the World Business Council on Sustainable Development. We would like to congratulate him on being knighted in recognition of his services to British business, as well as for his leadership of the World Business Council for Sustainable Development.

We are also pleased to welcome Mr. George Mitchell and his son Todd, Chairman of the Houston Advanced Research Center. Mr. Mitchell is a legend in sustainability. His contributions include his critical support and leadership related to the landmark National Research Council study on sustainability, "Our Common Future." He has also endowed the George and Cynthia Mitchell Chair in Sustainable Development at Rice. We are indeed grateful for your leadership and generosity, Mr. Mitchell.

There are many others here who have contributed significantly to this conference and to the Center. These include representatives from Rice University's James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy, and the Environmental and Energy Systems Institute. We would also like to thank representatives of the Shell Oil Foundation, which so generously endowed the Shell Center. Finally, we wish to thank our friends from France who have also played a key role in supporting this effort.

As the executive director of the Shell Center, the one pronoun I wish to avoid is "I", as the success of the Shell Center for Sustainability will be a team effort. Over the coming years, I hope we will build a Center, which is focused, targeted, with measurable impact.

I hope that we will focus on the great issues of air quality, sustainability in urban areas, the treatment and provision of water, and the development of new sources of energy. I look forward to drawing upon the diverse resources here at Rice University, both in terms of the students, as well as their teachers and administrators.

In my short ten weeks here, I have found this university to be a treasure trove of expertise in so many areas related to sustainability—water, air, energy, urban sustainability, economics, political science, and more. I hope that as we move ahead, we will different disciplines into an interdisciplinary approach to sustainable development. I hope that as we succeed, we will become a model for other institutions committed to sustainability.

Most importantly, I hope that we will be able to ignite the passion of the students at Rice and elsewhere for a sustainable approach to growth. I hope that they will adopt sustainability as a guiding value. I hope that --no matter what profession they choose throughout their life times --they will consider sustainability to be a tool that will enable them to have positive impact on

the environment, their communities, and economic growth. And finally, I hope that the Center will continue to learn, learn and learn from people from all walks of life.

In that regard, I would like to introduce one of the teachers from whom I've learned a great deal in my brief time here, and that is Dr. Malcolm Gillis. Dr. Gillis received his B.A. and M.A. degrees from the University of Florida and his Ph.D. from the University of Illinois. He has had distinguished academic careers and experiences at Duke University as well as Harvard. He came to Rice University in 1993 to become President. Dr. Gillis has co-authored, edited or written some 70 articles and eight books, and before assuming his administrative responsibilities at Rice, he was engaged in a wide range of consulting and providing advice to governments throughout the world, most notably Columbia, Bolivia, Peru, and Indonesia, as well as consulting for the United States government, Canadian government, and the World Bank.

It is a pleasure to welcome Dr. Gillis.
Thank you.