# Summary: #BetterFuture Seminar at MWC19 Los Angeles

What does progressive leadership look like in the digital age? Industry leaders came together for the Better Future Seminar on 23 October at MWC19 Los Angeles to explore the role of progressive leadership in achieving a better future for all through innovative technologies, responsible business strategies, and sustainable solutions.

The seminar was opened by Alix Jagueneau, Head of External Affairs, GSMA, who spoke about the industry's commitment to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (UN SDGs). She pointed to the massive potential of mobile to accelerate the UN SDGs; today mobile is reaching 5 billion people across the globe with 140 million of those people gaining access to mobile internet for the first time in the past year. "Mobile is no longer a communication device, it's a way to access healthcare, education and to tackle global challenges like climate change", said Alix. She urged attendees to find out more in the recently released 2019 Mobile Industry SDG Impact Report.
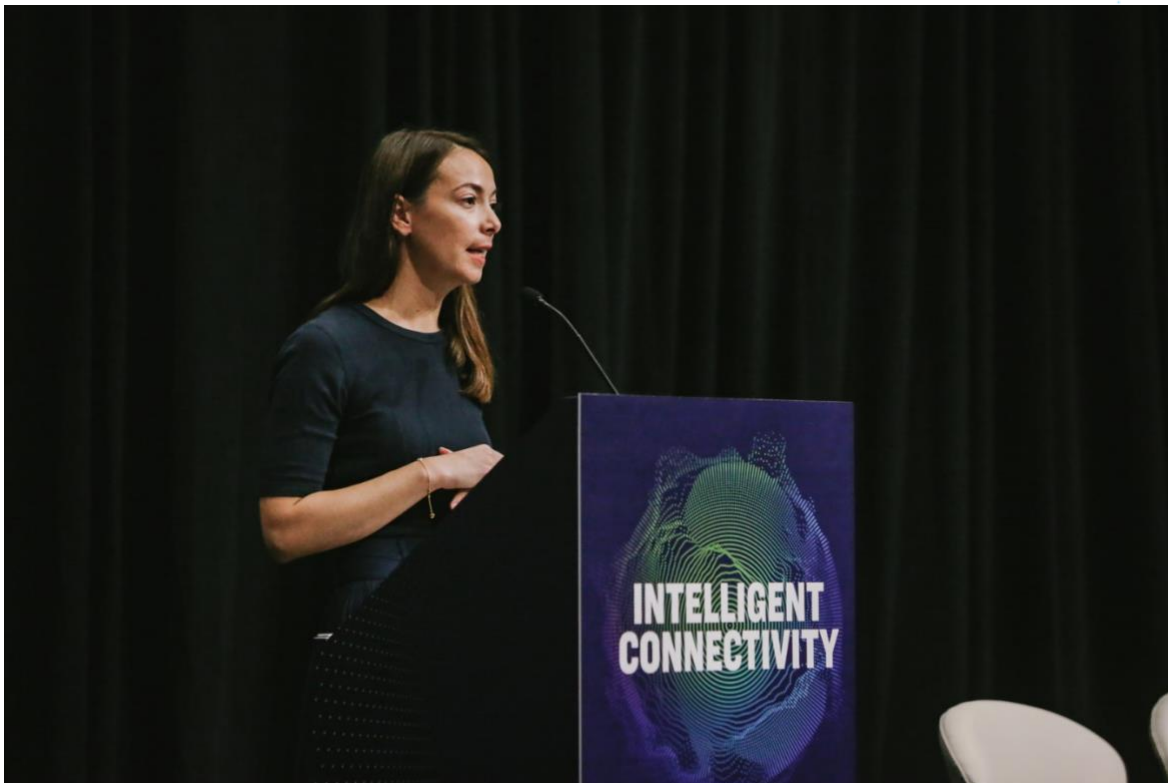
Keynote

The keynote address was made by Ana Tavares Lattibeaudiere, Head of North America, GSMA. She spoke about the dual pressure from employees and from consumers to make purpose and responsibility central to business, especially younger people. Millennials and Gen Z not only want to work for purpose-driven companies but are also willing to pay more for products from those companies. Ana discussed what some North American operators are doing to create social impact, from Sprint bringing mobile connectivity to high-school pupils so they can do their homework, to AT&T's work reducing water consumption in California. Ana highlighted the Digital Declaration and Tech4Girls as examples of the industry's commitment to the SDGs.


Panel Discussion

The keynote was followed by a panel discussion on '*Delivering Sustainable and Responsible Innovations*', with panellists including Masaaki Koga, General Manager, Industry Standards, KDDI; Heather Johnson, VP Sustainability & Corporate Responsibility, Ericsson; Amanda Gardiner, Director, Corporate Social Responsibility, Verizon; and Joan Krajewski, President and Founder, One Planet LLC.

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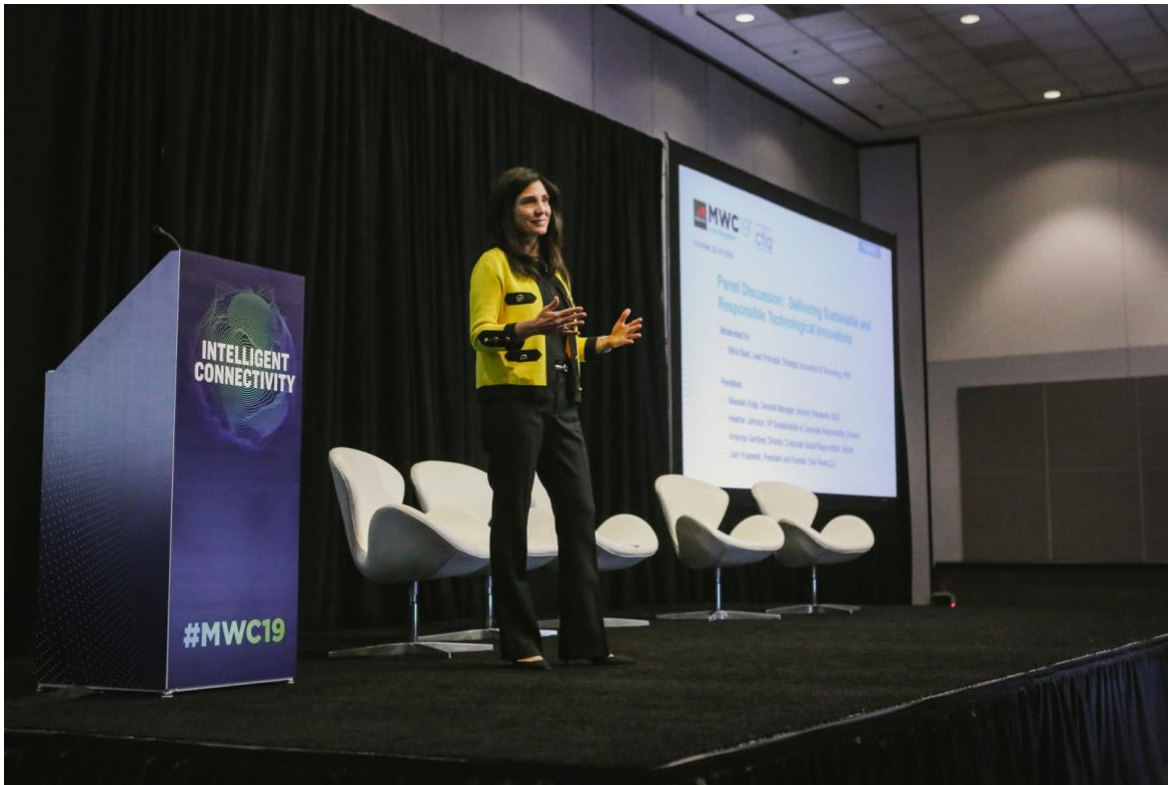
The panel was moderated by Mitra Best, Lead Principal, Strategic Innovation & Technology, at PwC. PwC recently worked with the GSMA on the 'Mobile Big Data Solutions for a Better Future' report, which outlines the massive potential of mobile big data to positively affect 150 million people over the next five years by improving the way in which governments and development agencies design, implement and monitor public projects. Mitra advised companies to use the report as their "companion guide to helping to achieve the SDGs". With 2.5 quintillion bytes of data being created a day, Mitra highlighted the power of mobile big data to drive rich and timely insights that help to solve social challenges.

The part that mobile big data can play in sustainable, responsible leadership was illustrated by the panellists in several examples. Masaaki Koga spoke about KDDI's work with the Japanese government to assist in disaster relief efforts. He highlighted the importance of companies forming partnerships in aid of the public sector; the project was a collaboration between KDDI, Toyota, and OYO, with each company providing insights to the Japanese government based on anonymised, aggregated data.

Mobile technology also has a powerful and unique ability to support climate action through digitisation, for instance by monitoring fragile ecosystems. The 'Connected Mangroves'

project, led by Ericsson, employs IoT solutions to aid with the reforestation of mangroves forests which have declined by 50% over the last 50 years. This project has been a success, with sapling survival rate doubling in Malaysia since it started.
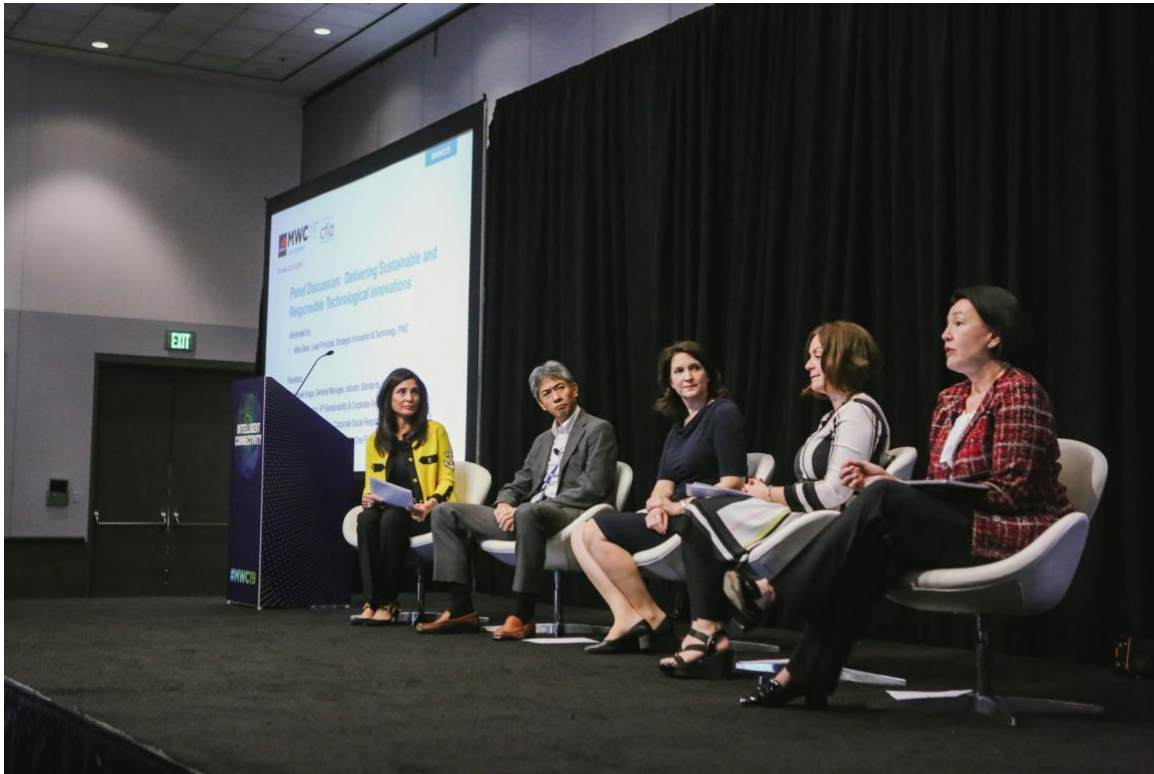
The panel was united in their view that companies not only had a responsibility but also a business need to make a positive impact on society Heather said that "sustainability is good for long term business" which was reinforced by Joan Krajewski, who pointed out that companies who add purpose to their goals and strategy perform better because they better understand risks and possible disruptions. An understanding that purpose-driven businesses perform better may well be driving a trend which several panellists referenced; many mainstream investors see themselves as responsible funds.

In fact, as Amanda Gardiner pointed out, "businesses are built and exist to solve social problems" so the dichotomy between business and purpose might be more of a perception than reality. She stated that companies cannot operate in societies that don't work, they need stable environments with customers who are able to buy their products, so they not only have a responsibility but a need to make society better.

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However, for businesses to have a positive societal impact they need to build ethical behaviour into their strategy. Amanda extended this point by saying "how we innovate is as important as what we innovate"; when trying to effect social change you need to start a with social problem rather than trying to find an application for technology. Joan emphasized that as well as designing ethically, companies also need to embed responsible behaviour throughout a company, with leadership pointing the way forward. Amanda said Verizon's belief that companies need to publicly commit to leading ethically was behind the decision to sign the Digital Declaration, as well as the fact "no single company is going to save the world, we need to work together to do that."

To learn more watch the recording of the panel on the GSMA Youtube channel.

If you would like to find out more about the initiatives mentioned during the seminar please visit:
www.gsma.com/betterfuture
www.gsma.com/betterfuture/demonstrating-transformational-leadership
www.gsma.com/climate
www.digitaldeclaration.com/

To contact the team, please email industrypurposeevents@gsma.com.

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