

# Solar present

Written by: OECD

Last update: 23 January 2020



Solar present | Picture for Solar present

**“We are not in the future. The rest of the world is in the past.”** Swiss innovator Bertrand Piccard whose round-the-world flight in a solar-powered plane absorbed the world’s attention and imagination in 2015-16, does not mince words. Piccard proved that solar-powered transport is technically possible. What is needed now are investors and policymakers to help make it happen, not least by providing legal frameworks and cutting back on bureaucracy, he told a packed audience at the Big IdEAs distinguished speaker series, organised by the International Energy Agency and hosted by the OECD in September 2017.

Mr Piccard was the initiator and visionary behind the plane. The first Solar Impulse plane took off in 2010, and was followed in 2015 by Solar Impulse 2, which Mr Piccard co-piloted with André Borschberg on a round-the-world trip, ending in July 2016. It was the very first airplane to circumnavigate the globe without fuel, propelled entirely by solar energy. Electric aviation for short-haul flights will be a reality within a decade, Mr Piccard bets.

A medical doctor and explorer, Mr Piccard is a forward-thinking leader and activist on sustainability. It is not just about technology but about belief, understanding and determination, he says as he urges his audiences to break free

of current paradigms in order to change the future. Mr Piccard is now leveraging his pioneering exploits to encourage investment in renewable energies and build strategic alliances to confront climate change. One goal he is working on is a list of 1,000 solutions that are “profitable for protecting the environment”, which he will present at the UN climate change summit, COP24, in Poland in 2018.

It’s a tall order, but Mr Piccard is used to that : “When we started out people laughed at us. We felt like Dumbo [with our big solar airplane]. We don’t know which road leads to our goal—so we need to visit all of them.”

©OECD Observer No 311, Q3 2017

## References

Watch Bertrand Piccard’s Big IdEAs lecture at <https://youtu.be/NqFA4m7r-jI>

Visit: <http://bertrandpiccard.com> and <https://solarimpulse.com/>

For more on the Big IdEAs series, see [www.iea.org/newsroom/events/bigideas/](http://www.iea.org/newsroom/events/bigideas/)

See also the OECD’s New Approaches to Economic Challenges initiative at [www.oecd.org/NAEC](http://www.oecd.org/NAEC)

Read “With the sun on its wings” in OECD Observer No 279 May 2010, <http://oe.cd/-b> [2010](http://oe.cd/-b), <http://oe.cd/-b>