

Chapter 1: Introducing contemporary organizational behaviour

OB in Focus

Climate Change: a challenge for us all

Mount Kilimanjaro – the tallest mountain in Africa – has been topped with snow for millennia. But scientists are predicting that its ice cap may have less than a decade left, with ice quantities falling by over 80 per cent in the past 100 years. As our planet warms up, Kilimanjaro’s disappearing snow-cap aptly illustrates both the climate challenge facing us and the urgency of addressing it. The 10 hottest years on record have occurred during the past 15 years. Margaret Beckett, formerly British Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, and Patricia Hewitt, formerly Secretary of State for Trade and Industry, said, ‘Climate change is the greatest environmental challenge facing the international community today ... It’s now widely accepted by most independent scientists that climate change is taking place as a result of human activity releasing greenhouse gases into the atmosphere’.

As the world’s economy grows, energy demand will undoubtedly increase. In 2002, the generation of energy and heat accounted for 40 per cent of worldwide carbon dioxide emissions. In China, 80 per cent of the power plants that will be used by 2020 have yet to be built. Climate change is not just an environmental challenge; it is an economic challenge too. It has been estimated that the economic cost of global warming could double to US\$150 billion each year in the next 10 years, hitting insurance companies with US\$30–40 billion in annual claims.

‘We must achieve increased awareness of the need for cleaner, more efficient technology in the short term, and R&D into new technologies in the longer term, but this doesn’t remove the need for action now,’ said Beckett and Hewitt. G8 members are reported to be already showing leadership, particularly on work towards a hydrogen economy, carbon dioxide capture and storage and renewable technologies. Climate change affects us all today, and will increasingly affect future generations and therefore cannot be viewed as a far-off, abstract, future inconvenience. The international community must act decisively now.

