

Welcome Speech for GIIN Investor Forum – Amit Bouri – 7 Dec 2016

Good morning and welcome. It is so exciting to be here. At the GIIN we have been looking forward to this day for quite some time. We are thrilled to finally be here with all of you.

Amsterdam is the perfect place to host this event, as it is a city known for its centuries of leadership and innovation in finance, business, and trade. It seems fitting that we are here to learn more from each other about impact investing, a movement that is reinventing and reimagining the capital markets.

I have the privilege of traveling to Amsterdam quite frequently, and I am always impressed with the city's remarkable architecture.

If you stand out in front of this hotel and look across the square, you can see the Nieuwe Kerk, or the 'new church'. From an American perspective, the name seems like a misnomer. For the history buffs in the room, the church was built in the 15th century, well before the United States was even established as a country. But it is new when compared to the Oude Kerk, the 'old church', which is the oldest building in the city, built around 1300.

Like many European cathedrals, the Old Church was built over generations. Each person who built an arch or colonnade was contributing to the grandeur of the final structure, even if they might not have lived to see its completion.

I see many parallels between this and the impact investing market we are building together. Both illustrate how the work that is done today will benefit generations to come.

All of you in this room, whether you have been investing for decades or are just beginning to develop your practice, are helping to lay the groundwork for the market of tomorrow. This is a market that has boundless potential to make a dramatic positive impact on social and environmental problems.

Regardless of how long you have been making impact investments, you have certainly noticed the undeniable traction the industry has gained in recent years.

Impact investing has witnessed a swell of support from governments and thought leaders around the world, earning the backing of many global leaders.

It has become a common topic of interest in the media, signaling much greater awareness of impact investing. In just the last week, impact investing was the focus of stories in the Financial Times, African Law and Business, Germany's Bilanz, The Australian Financial Review, and the Financial Express Bangladesh, among many others. We are pleased many members of the press are joining us today.

Impact investing has also attracted the attention of mainstream financial institutions that invest significant sums of capital—a promising signal for the scaling of this market.

All evidence from our industry research speaks to strong and sustained growth, as well as strong financial performance.

But perhaps we see the most compelling signal of the market's traction when we look around this room. More than 800 practitioners registered for this Forum, including investors from over 45 countries and 6 continents.

It is clear that this industry has captured the interest of a diverse global community of investors. But we must not allow ourselves to become complacent.

If there is a single message that I hope you take away from this Forum, it is this: business as usual is not enough.

The challenges the world faces are still very real, very powerful, and very urgent.

Last September the international community committed to the UN Sustainable Development Goals. These goals aim to end poverty, protect the planet, and ensure that all people enjoy peace and prosperity. Many in this room have already affirmed their support for achieving these goals.

But of course now the work begins and the stakes are high. The challenges facing the world's marginalized populations require immediate action.

We witnessed another major achievement for the international community in COP21. Signed by 195 countries, this universal climate initiative seeks to drive forward solutions to protect our planet.

Again the stakes are high. This year we saw record pollution in South Asia, which caused an estimated 220 million children to breathe dangerously toxic air. And entire coastal communities risk being washed away by rising sea levels.

Additionally, with significant political disruption and division many countries have faced in the last year, even as recently as this week, it is more important than ever for the private sector to consider how our work can help fuel a just and equitable society.

It is a critical time for investors to look around them, at the challenges facing their communities and the environment, and to consider how capital can be directed to generate long-term solutions.

The GIIN, along with our partners at Private Equity International and our expert advisory board, have developed an ambitious agenda for this forum. It was designed around topics that have the potential to significantly advance the market.

Together, we will explore ways to increase impact investing activity, in terms of growing the market, advancing your portfolio, and deepening the impact of each individual investment.

We will identify opportunities to draw in more mainstream investors that have the potential to bring in massive sums of capital. We will also explore the central role impact measurement and management plays in maintaining the integrity of the industry as it develops.

One of the most remarkable and invigorating qualities of the impact investing community is our willingness to collaborate with one another to advance the market. Collaboration is key to the ambitious growth we seek to achieve. As you connect and learn from each other over the next two days, I want to remind you: business as usual is not enough.

Beyond considering how an insight or strategy can improve your practice incrementally or evolve the market in gradations, consider how we can activate dramatic change.

How can we progress the market in leaps and bounds?

How can we multiply the amount of capital fueling effective solutions?

We are all responsible for fulfilling the true promise of the impact investing market.

We don't have generations to wait to build our cathedrals. The challenges we face right now are too important and too urgent. The progress we make over the next few days will help build a stronger, more resilient impact investing industry, and ensure we deliver a stronger, more resilient future for generations to come.

And for that reason, I would like to thank all of you for being here today. And I would like to give a thank you to everyone who made this event a success.

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