

Pilot Piccard says solar flight is dream come true

June 23 2016, by Adrien Vicente



Bertrand Piccard celebrates at Sevilla airport on June 23, 2016, after the 70-hour sun-powered journey from New York

Swiss adventurer Bertrand Piccard, 58, has just realised his dream of crossing the Atlantic ocean solo aboard the Solar Impulse 2 plane, with the Sun as his only source of power.

He speaks to AFP about this "magical moment", his hero Charles

Lindbergh and the creation of an international clean energy lobby group.

Q: Tell us about this 71-hour journey

R: It wasn't an easy flight. You had to navigate your way between clouds, go above clouds, withstand turbulence, it was quite a tactical flight. There were moments where you had to really pilot (the plane), and moments when I could let go and realise it was actually happening.

Whenever possible, I would look out, everything calm and tranquil, and I just tried to soak in this magical experience—when you fly without any noise or fuel, it's magic.

During the flight, I slept very, very little. But it's so amazing: you have the whole ocean around you, the whole sky, in the middle of nature, you fly with the force of nature, you fly with the sun. It's extraordinary harmony. I wanted to make the most of every moment.

Q: Do you feel like you're writing history?

R: "It's a flight I've been awaiting for 17 years. Seventeen years ago, I had this vision of a solar plane that would fly day and night, that would go round the world, that would cross oceans. When that happens, it's a magical moment.

I thought of Lindbergh (first man to fly solo across the Atlantic) because I met him when I was 11, we were both at the Apollo 12 take-off, and for me Lindbergh is one of these heroes who did what no one thought was possible.

I want to use this [flight](#) to pave the way for clean technology, for renewable energy. Because these clean technologies exist now, they're possible, you can cut by half the world's energy consumption thanks to

clean technologies.

People in government, in companies lack this pioneering spirit that would allow these technologies to be used daily.

Q: So what next?

R: We should have two more stops (on Solar Impulse 2's round-the-world trip), one that Andre Borschberg (who rotates with Piccard to fly the [plane](#)) will do to Egypt, and the last one, that I will do if all goes well at the beginning of July to Abu Dhabi.

That will be the moment to use everything we did, all we have accomplished to this date to really push for clean technologies.

Where commercial aviation is concerned, being powered by the sun is still far away. For the moment, only one person can be on board. But all these technologies can be applied to 97 percent of energy consumed on the ground.

It's not our lifestyle that pollutes so much as the old technologies that we're still using.

Two years ago, I created Future is Clean, which groups together 420 associations. We have influential sponsors: Prince Albert I of Monaco, Richard Branson, Al Gore. But now we want to go further.

I announced with Andre the creation of an International Committee of Clean Technologies, because what is lacking right now is a neutral international organisation that knows what it's talking about and that can advise governments and companies.

Everything (now) is fragmented, with small associations that have a lot

of goodwill but no means, and what I would like to do is gather them together to forge a common route and be a credible intermediary for all those who need to know how to use these technologies.

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Citation: Pilot Piccard says solar flight is dream come true (2016, June 23) retrieved 29 April 2024 from <https://techxplore.com/news/2016-06-piccard-solar-flight-true.html>

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