Shell Names New CEO to Replace Retiring Voser

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THE HAGUE, Netherlands (AP) — Royal Dutch Shell PLC says it is appointing its downstream director Ben van Beurden to replace Peter Voser as CEO when Voser retires next year.

Van Beurden's promotion marks a return to a Dutchman leading the Netherlands-British multinational after the tenure of Voser, who is Swiss.

Warwick Business School Associate Professor Christian Stadler, who has researched Royal Dutch Shell extensively, says the appointment of van Beurden could spell promise for Shell’s future. Stadler has interviewed six former Shell CEOs and notes that Van Beurden’s experience downstream echoes that of former CEO Jeroen van der Veer, who Stadler found “particularly impressive.”

Shell chairman Jorma Ollila says 55-year-old Van Beurden "has deep knowledge of the industry and proven executive experience across a range of Shell businesses."

“My opinion is that he offers continuity, which I would see as a good thing for the company,” says Stadler who notes that “floating LNG (liquified natural gas) is one of the big technologies that the company is shaping” and believes “Mr. van Beurden had some role in that.”

Stadler points out that most of what van Beurden will bring to the table is stability. “It probably is best for the company not to have any dramatic new changes or introductions of completely new ways of doing things,” he says. “Having too many changes creates confusion, and a difficulty to get things done. So I would say keeping things more or less on track with a bit more focus on the cost side while certainly continuing to be strong on the technology side would be the right way forward for the corporation.”

Van Beurden has worked for Shell's upstream and downstream businesses in Europe, Africa, Asia and the United States.

Shell announced Tuesday he will take over from Voser on Jan. 1, 2014. Voser will retire at the end of March 2014 after 29 years with the company.

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