



# Summary Record on 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Open Forum “Sharing the Achievements, Embracing the Future”

Diaoyutai State Guesthouse, Beijing  
(November 17, 2011)

## I. Introduction

In November 2011 the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (“the Council” or CCICED, pronounced “sea-said”) held the fifth annual general meeting of its fourth phase. Immediately following the conclusion of this meeting, the Council reconvened to celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary with an awards ceremony and speeches and statements by members and former members.

## II. Opening Remarks by Li Ganjie

CCICED Secretary General Li Ganjie opened the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary forum and introduced leaders and former Council members. He welcomed distinguished guests, experts, and associates.

In his remarks Li Ganjie said that 20 years is just a drop of water in the river of history, but during these past 20 years big changes have taken place in the theory and practice of environmental development in China. CCICED’s achievement should be attributed to the consistent support provided by the Chinese government and to the efforts of the Council’s founders and builders as well as its members and supporters.

The theme of this forum is “Sharing the Achievements, Embracing the Future.” This means we should not only look back on the history and development of CCICED but more importantly look toward the Council’s future so that we can enable it to play an even bigger role in helping China achieve the goals of its “12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan” (FYP).

### III. Special Remarks by Song Jian

Li Ganjie introduced Song Jian, former State Councillor of China and Chairperson of CCICED during Phase I. As Li Ganjie put it, Song Jian is one of the founding fathers of CCICED. Here are the highlights of Song Jian's remarks:

It is gratifying to see that CCICED is playing an important role in China's environment and development. The Council has developed into a very influential platform and organization, and sets a good example for international cooperation.

There is a Chinese saying that "time flies," and 20 years have passed in the blink of an eye. In these 20 years, with support from scientists and experts and friendly governments, we have enjoyed rapid development. In the past the Chinese people suffered from poverty and backwardness as a result of foreign aggression, civil wars, natural disasters, and manmade calamities. China used to be called the sick man of Asia. But after the founding of New China — and especially in the past 30 years — we have done quite a good job of developing our country. We built industry, reduced poverty, eradicated diseases, protected the environment, and controlled population growth. So the Chinese people are now quite happy.

These achievements made by the Chinese people wouldn't have been possible without the support of international friends and experts and scientists and governments. Premier Wen and Vice-Premier Li have both affirmed the contribution made by the Council and expressed their gratitude to all of you for your support. I totally agree with them.

20 years ago the Chinese government realized clearly that China did not have sufficient experience and knowledge in sustainable development and modernization. China needed guidance from UN agencies and help from countries which treat us as equals. CCICED was founded against this backdrop.

Many recommendations from the Council have been incorporated into China's laws and departmental regulations. According to Chinese tradition, all those recommendations are published. The most important ones are submitted to senior central government leaders. The original copy is kept by the central archives for future generations to see. In China we have a saying: we want to keep important documents in the temples of the famous mountains for future generations to see.

Right from the founding of CCICED we stressed the importance of drawing on the experiences and lessons of western countries. That is to say, we aimed to integrate the policy of environmental protection into our national development strategy.

China has decided to take scientific development as the winning approach, and the



transformation of economic development mode as the major task. It is interesting to note that past CCICED reports have put great emphasis on this point. The “12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan” commits China to becoming a resource-conserving and environmentally friendly society. This too was a basic idea put forward by the Council, that is, that environmental protection needs to be incorporated into law, into development strategies, and into the highest decision-making processes.

According to the United Nations, in another three decades China will have 1.5 billion people. As some people have claimed, all the earth’s resources are insufficient to give everyone in China a happy life. People want electricity, air conditioners, autos, and so forth. Inevitably, energy consumption will grow — but we still need to reduce emissions. Chinese scientists have been making suggestions about how to do this, for example by no longer burning coal, but such recommendations would be hard for the government to adopt.

In view of the fact that the global population is projected to rise possibly to 15 billion, the Council should take China as a case study on how to solve the problem of emissions reduction and response to climate change while enabling such a huge population to have a decent life. In this way China can contribute to the world in helping solve the conflict between development and environment.

#### IV. Keynote Speech by Achim Steiner

Li Ganjie introduced Achim Steiner, Executive Director of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and a member of CCICED during Phases II, III, and IV. Steiner spoke on the theme of “Rio+20: World Process on Environment and Development.” Here are the main points of his presentation:

Anniversaries are special moments. I begin by paying tribute to all of you here in this hall today. I think you have assembled here — both from outside and inside China — pioneers in trying to change our appreciation of what it means to manage our environment more responsibly and sustainably.

Not only is this the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CCICED, but next year we observe the anniversary of the 1992 Rio conference. That meeting changed the conversation about development, because it was the first global articulation that development cannot be measured by economic indicators alone. Next year is also the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the pioneers from 1972 who began that conversation at the global level at Stockholm, and whose work led to the establishment of UNEP.

During this period the history and evolution of the China Council reflects also the journey of learning and appreciation that the global community has passed through. The

environmental agenda in its earlier stages was one of recognizing the destruction in the immediate vicinity of where we lived, worked, conducted our daily business. It was driven by a realization that the kind of pollution and habitat destruction that was taken as a given in the development process was beginning to harm people — literally to kill people. That's why the early agenda was focused on cleanup.

Subsequently, science began to open our eyes to the fact that humanity had managed in less than 150 years to move from being just one more biological actor in the global ecosystem to becoming such a dominant player that we were beginning to affect the planet's fundamental life support systems. That consciousness has been central to understanding the incredibly rapid evolution of the environmental agenda over the last 20 years.

In less than 100 years we have affected the resources in the oceans to such an extent the oceans are warming. We are confronted with thermal expansion as a result of global warming. We are affecting the icecaps resulting in a sea level rise this century probably of a meter or more. Remarkably, well over half the world's fisheries are already at a maximum level of exploitation, or are declining or on the verge of doing so.

We face issues of food security and continue to practice agriculture in a way that historians will one day say: How blind could a society be? Even as we try to feed 7 billion people (one day perhaps 15 billion) we are destroying the very foundation of agriculture — the production factor called land — at an unprecedented scale, through desalination, desertification, and degradation. Loss of arable soils has reached a level never before found in terms of human impacts on the planet.

The scientific and empirical knowledge that has informed us about these impacts has helped take the environmental agenda to another level. We have begun to talk about ecosystems, the atmosphere, the biosphere, biodiversity. We have begun to appreciate the peril of species extinction (even as we are going through perhaps the greatest extinction crisis in human memory). Thanks to this scientific knowledge, here at the China Council our conversation about the environmental aspects of development has matured, progressed, and taken on an entirely different dimension. We have begun to understand that the environmental dimension of sustainable development is increasingly becoming a defining element of development rather than a resource simply to drive it.

Even though the world has articulated a paradigm for development that recognizes the linkages among social equity, environmental sustainability, and economic development, and even though we have had an extraordinary two decades of innovation and experimentation, we have not yet realized the goal we set in 1992, that is, to manage sustainable development as a three-dimensional process — economic, social, and environmental — and not as



separate pillars that for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century were essentially in competition with one another.

The China Council is extraordinary in that it has become one of the platforms in the world where the conversation about development has matured so that it speaks to the challenges and opportunities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There is a quality to thinking, analysis, and conversation that you will find in few other places. A lot of this has to do with the people assembled around the Council — people who will articulate innovation with responsibility but also with an ambition to think about development differently.

We also appreciate China's own evolution of thinking and its vision of development as expressed in the new FYP. China is one of the few nations (if not the only nation) that views its own short-term development against the backdrop of a civilizational challenge — a vision of ecological civilization.

To some in the world at large — hardnosed economists, financial market operators, politicians — this concept of ecological civilization may seem abstract. But we have to confront the fact that, although we identified a civilizational challenge in 1992, as of 2012 we have not yet found a response to that challenge. With all the great things that have happened in the context of sustainable development in recent decades, the harsh bottom line is that in virtually all major indicators of sustainability, the world is not heading in the right direction. In some respects it is accelerating in the wrong direction.

Whether it is carbon emissions, or the state of the oceans and fisheries, or the challenge of feeding a hungry world, or whether it is recognizing that, eight years from now, one-third of humanity will live in water-stressed situations, whether it is the spectre of climate change — we will continue to debate until the flooding we have seen in Bangkok will happen in 25 cities instead of just one or two right now.

When almost half a nation is flooded, as we saw in Pakistan last year, isn't this a moment where you would expect the world to say: surely this is a reason to look at a change of direction. I think the world is beginning to reach that point, and this is why the terminology with which we now discuss sustainable development here in the Council and worldwide is characterized by terms like transformation. We are at the point where the planetary boundaries — what a planet can sustain — are now coming to such close perimeter with the footprint of humanity's economic actions that transformation is called for.

In many ways, next year's conference in Rio is trying to catch up with what the China Council has articulated on many of these issues over the past few years. I encourage the Council to take this opportunity to bring some of the lessons of its thinking to Rio. The

world would benefit from it — not in terms of a Chinese model or Chinese leadership — but because of the thinking that China has fostered in this Council over two decades.

The summit in Rio is happening against a backdrop of exactly the opposite of what the meeting is about. We are confronted with financial crises, banking crises, natural catastrophes — lots of excuses for focusing on the short term rather than the long term.

Many might say, what can a summit on sustainable development in 2012 really achieve? Perhaps we need to rethink the way we look at sustainable development, not as something that is a destination in the future (which was the psychology of 1992) but as a current imperative we must achieve so that we will actually have a future. In that sense the thematic focus of the Rio conference next year is not about some distant vision about an alternative future. It is a dramatic reflection on the need for transformation.

We must also recognize that the age when individual nations and communities could determine their own wellbeing by what happens within their boundaries is long gone. Our world is condemned for better or worse to have to act collectively. That is a fundamental principle that needs to be rediscovered. We are a world divided, lacking in common objectives and purpose and orientation. We define our abilities to act by the actions of others. That has often been a tragic error. Whether it is in climate change negotiations or other fora, the notion that you move first before I move has become a recipe for paralysis.

This paralysis cements inequities and deprives us of the ability to act responsibly for the future. That is why in Rio we must ask ourselves: how can we govern together as a community of 7 billion people, in 193 countries, hundreds of languages, thousands of agenda, and 10,000 reasons why my particular interest should come first? We must govern with a responsibility and understanding that no nation today is able to chart its own course. This is why we will look both at governance in general and more specifically at the international environmental governance framework.

Here again the evolution of the discussion at the global level reflects the discussion in China. Many of us have been witness to China's decision to establish the Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP). Its environmental policy-making is increasingly becoming more than just putting norms and standards and regulations into place, more than monitoring, more than enforcement. Instead, MEP informs the discourse about the future opportunities and options of a nation.

That is why we are so privileged, as members and associates of the Council, to follow this discussion in China. I suggest to those who want to understand where the global sustainable development agenda will move next, look to China, because here we see both the dramatic choices that are being made and also the sense of responsibility and the



opportunity to act.

Recently a UN colleague said: We have viewed in the past 20 years the main challenge for the world as being located or centered in the global south; perhaps the world needs to realize that a growing number of indicators suggest that the greatest challenge of the next 20 to 30 years may be located in the global north.

That change in perception in itself begins to redefine the parameters for global action. It will make tectonic shifts occur in the way we have defined and divided the world. There is no longer that clear line between north and south, developed and developing countries. Sustainability is now a global responsibility, and one that must be acted on collectively.

## V. Keynote Speech by Qu Geping

Li Ganjie introduced Qu Geping, former Administrator of China's National Environmental Protection Agency, among other senior posts, and Vice-Chair of CCICED during Phases I, II, and III. He spoke on the topic "China's Progress, Challenges and Opportunities for Environment and Development." Here are the highlights of his presentation:

Today I wish to talk about large and serious issues in China's social and political structures as they relate to the environment. There is a "lagging" of political structures which has fostered income inequities between countryside and city, regional differences, and widening gaps between various social strata resulting in social tensions. Resource depletion has created serious environmental problems which continue to grow and which are turning into extremely grave social and economic problems.

This situation places before us a number of possible scenarios as well as paths to follow. We have two options, either of which could happen: that development will continue in China in a positive way, or that it could be an extremely unhealthy process. As the global economy becomes more integrated and environmental issues are internationalized, environmental issues become tangled in international economic, social, and political interests. So we have our own national problems, and then there are international problems to think about too.

What do we do in this situation? We need to continue Deng Xiao-ping's policy of opening and reform, which includes adjusting social and political structures, coordinating economic and social interests, and easing social tensions and conflicts. Then we will be able to provide guarantees and drivers for China's transformation of the development pattern. We will solve from the root a number of environmental problems enabling us to carry out sustainable development and build a green economy and an ecological civilization. Reforms

in economic and political structures are fundamental to this process.

We must accept that our environment faces an extremely grave situation. As a MEP document says: there have been some partial improvements, but overall the situation is deteriorating. This is the kind of clear assessment we need to have; we cannot be blindly optimistic.

To achieve sustainable development, we need to look at three interlinked areas:

First, some serious challenges have resulted from rapid growth combined with slow structural transformation. Although even as early as the 9<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan the central government proposed a transformation of economic structures, today we still have rapid industrialization and urbanization, with heavy industry going into high gear toward peak production, and relying on large investments and extensive resource competition. Despite the passage of time, this mode of production — investment-driven, and characterized by competition for resources — has not changed. Structural adjustment has been slow, and in fact sometimes it has been reversed.

We are limited increasingly by the scarcity of resources and by deterioration in the overall environment. How much more land, water, and other resources is China going to need? How is it going to use them? I think we are actually swimming against the current, because there are so many problems and so many issues. It's going to be extremely difficult to protect the environment under these circumstances. Sometimes we are even forced to retreat. Now, we can take certain measures which may be effective, but overall, if things don't change the situation is only going to get worse.

Second, the economic system and the public management system lag behind the situation and are unsynchronized. Furthermore, their reforms proceed only with great difficulty. The relationship between government and markets is still unclear. In local governments you see the concept of "GDP first above all," for example in performance evaluation. Often, local governments are only thinking about their own region or their own city, and they look upon their own activities as sort of a business enterprise.

Meanwhile, the rule of law and the provision of public service — traditional functions of government — have not been effectively established. Excessive pursuit of investment to start projects and to use local resources in order to drive local output and increase tax revenue has resulted in a neglect of public services, and a neglect of protection of the environment and of the public interest. Often, local governments launch a "green campaign," or an "environmental protection activity," but the results actually only serve market forces. In fact there was no real attempt to make it green. These were just slogans.

We must step up reforms in the economy and in public management, and rely on the





law to fortify the role of government, especially in public services. Only then will we be able to strengthen environmental management and the effectiveness of government measures. The environment, after all, is not an isolated issue; it is closely linked with all the operations of a nation.

We must set up a healthy governmental role for environmental protection and improve the management of public services. On the one hand we must emphasize the role of government and guidance, but at the same time make use of market leverage and recognize the important role of enterprises and the public. So it's not going to depend just on directives from MEP; it has to include everybody.

Third, in the process of social transformation we've seen that ethics and morals have become skewed. Over-consumption and the emphasis on money and material things have created a number of challenges. This single-minded pursuit of wealth and material comforts is a legitimate desire on the part of human beings, but we need to maintain some kind of balance between market and morals — between the material and the spiritual. In that way economic growth will be restrained by social values and we will be able to deal with this issue of imbalance and lack of coordination and unsustainability.

Today, many traditional Chinese moral and cultural values have been lost, but a new system — a new ecological civilization — is not yet in place. This creates pressure on the environment. If this pursuit of money and material things is not limited by values and moral teachings, and if we regard them as the only yardstick for social success, we are not going to be able to stop the destruction of the environment.

Ladies and gentlemen, China's environmental problems mainly stem from the economic growth model, inappropriate government policies, and poor management. These problems necessitate a fundamental shift in government management. That is why we need to learn from the experience overseas related to China's realities. The China Council has proposed good policy recommendations. I hope it will continue and provide its distinctive and original and unique perspectives and advice.

And how can all of us make a difference? In two ways. First, Council members — as in the past — should look at these urgent issues and propose specific and focused recommendations on issues that are widespread and serious in China. Second — as in the past, when the Chinese government heeded and adopted the Council's recommendations — we should put these ideas and advice into practice.

I think that what Council members have done is incredible. They are all from the bottom of their hearts genuinely and seriously trying to help China resolve the issues of environment and development. I say to our old friends: I express my respect and thanks to

you. I hope that all members of the China Council, old and new, will continue in this path, and I am sure that this will happen.

Here in China, there are certain things we should have done properly, but we did not. I am still hoping we can do things properly. Overall, development is not too bad in China, but there are many problems. If we don't deal with these issues properly I am quite worried about the future. I want so much that our economic development should proceed well — that we can have blue skies, and clear water, and a wonderful environment to live in.

## VI. Keynote Speech by Arthur Hanson

Li Ganjie introduced Arthur Hanson, Distinguished Fellow at the International Institute for Sustainable Development, CCICED member during all four phases, and International Chief Advisor during CCICED Phase IV, among other posts. He spoke on the topic “CCICED at 20 — Impacts and Looking Ahead” and he made the following points:

All that I wish to say about the China Council you will find in our book *CCICED at 20*. All, that is, except the emotion I have felt working with the Council. For me, CCICED has been a thrill, at times a terror. I have tried to come at this work as a humble servant to a great endeavour, and I submit that's how we all tried to come to this great roundtable — one of the greatest in the world, as far as I'm concerned.

The Council brings together people of different nationalities and organizational backgrounds. We've been fortunate to park our differences and our affiliations at the door, and walk in here and sit down and talk. I think one of the reasons the Council has worked so well is that we conduct a respectful dialogue. We learn from each other. We take ideas out of this room and we try to place them into our own societies. I think the organization is unique and I want to give some examples.

I often hear the expression “dreaming in the language.” When you have started dreaming in a new language you can be said to truly understand the setting. I confess even after my 20-year involvement in China I don't think I can dream in the Chinese language. But I cannot go through a day when I am not thinking about something related to China. The China Council is an exciting endeavour, and I am fortunate to be able to come to a setting like this and to share problem solving with a group this skilled and this interesting.

Something else that guides my thinking is my own grandchildren. When you have a child who is going to be here for 50, 75, 100 years, what can one say to that child? First of all I want to be able to say: I tried my best. And then I want to be able to say: I tried a lot of that in countries other than my native land, and particularly in Asian countries, and



particularly in China, and I hope that I have made some contributions and I want you children to do the same in your own lives. The advice I give these children is: try to understand China, because this country will be meaningful in your life. The point here is that what we do in the China Council is not only cross-cultural but also cross-generational in terms of our ultimate impact.

I believe that phase V will be the most exciting, the most significant phase of the Council's work, for many of the reasons that Qu Geping just mentioned. This is a time of great uncertainty — he describes the situation as being very grave — but we also have a great opportunity for China. China has the money, it has a better management system in place than ever, and it has new emerging industries that allow it to do things not only within China but in its relations with the world. So, a key message for the future is this: we face an unprecedented level of challenge, but also of opportunity.

The Council has been given a great deal of trust by the government of China. We have been able to do things that most other countries would not allow a foreign group to do. For example, right now we are looking at China's outgoing investment, and at China's image in the world and how it can improve this image as it relates to environment and development. It's extraordinary that we are able to do these studies.

Will China become an environmentally responsible citizen in the world? That is one of the key issues we will address in the coming five years. Of course, China is already a responsible citizen in many of its international activities, but how to strengthen that, how to use it to the mutual advantage of China and the rest of the world? And how to ensure that the international perception is positive about China's role?

Along with that comes another big question: is the moderately respectful dialogue that the China Council has always pursued a model that can apply elsewhere in the world? We don't really know the answer, because China is unique in so many ways. What is clear is that components of this model can certainly be applied elsewhere. That's one reason why the China Council ought to be highlighted at Rio+20. People should learn from us, and we should be prepared to share our experiences.

It has been a marvellous journey, a journey of learning, of happiness, of working with marvellous people, both at the international and Chinese level. It has also been a fulfilling journey. I think we have seen real progress in our work through the China Council.

In closing, I wish to acknowledge the support from team members who over the years have contributed much, for example, Earl Drake, Yichun Dai, and Chris Dagg from the International Support Office at Simon Fraser University. Here in Beijing we have a dedicated crew in the very small Secretariat who work hard and who contribute their



intellectual capacity and their practical capacity in organizing events and so forth, and who pull this together so that we can have these kinds of discussions. Thanks to all who have contributed.

## VII. Keynote Speech by Shen Guofang

Li Ganjie introduced Shen Guofang, former Vice President of the Chinese Academy of Engineering, CCICED member during Phases III and IV, and Chinese Chief Advisor during CCICED Phase IV, among other posts. He too spoke on the topic “CCICED at 20 — Impacts and Looking Ahead.” Here are the main points he made:

During the many years of my involvement with CCICED I have seen with my own eyes the development and progress in China’s environmental protection. And I have also witnessed the close cooperation and lasting friendship between the Chinese experts and the international experts, and I’m very proud of it.

The China Council has played another unique role: it has nurtured a generation of experts and scholars who are concerned about the protection of the environment. I myself have benefited a lot from my participation in this work. It has improved my understanding of the relationship between development and the protection of the environment. I have had more contacts with overseas colleagues, and so now I can look at these issues from different perspectives. It has benefited me very much as an old man, and I am sure it has also benefited the younger experts.

The issues discussed in the Council are wide ranging, plus we have a direct dialogue with the State Council, which is why we have attracted so many young experts in engineering, environmental protection, and the humanities. They have been doing sound research on macro-economics, policy design, and the drafting of the recommendations. While contributing to the Council they themselves have become more knowledgeable and experienced in these issues, and I’m sure this generation will contribute more in the future to the further protection of the environment in China.

20 years is a very important span for a person. In 20 years we become a young person, and then we become an old man, and then we become a really old man. And then we retire. I myself have seen one generation after another participating in the work of the Council. Today I am happy to have invited all the experts who have retired from their posts to celebrate the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary. However the China Council has clearly defined objectives and a clear mechanism and support from the international community, so 20 years is just a short time span for it. So the China Council is now at its prime.



## VIII. Outstanding Contribution Award Ceremony

On the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CCICED, the Council presented awards to organizations and individuals who have made outstanding contributions to its work.

The five organizations that were honoured are:

- (1) Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA)
- (2) German Agency for International Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit)
- (3) United Kingdom's Department for International Development
- (4) Netherlands' Ministry of Infrastructure and the Environment (Ministerie van Infrastructuur en Milieu)
- (5) Japan's Ministry of the Environment (Kankyōshō)

Also honoured were eight Council members who had made outstanding contributions during at least three phases of the Council's work. These individuals are:

- (6) Qu Geping
- (7) Achim Steiner
- (8) Arthur Hanson
- (9) Martin Lees
- (10) Claude Martin
- (11) Crispin Tickell
- (12) Julia Marton-Lefèvre
- (13) Björn Stigson

The award to Qu Geping was presented by former State Councillor and former CCICED Chair Song Jian.

Also honoured was Yichun Dai, who has been employed at the Secretariat's International Support Office in Canada during the entire two decades of the Council's existence. Her energy and dedication have helped provide the corporate continuity and enduring professionalism that have contributed so much to the success of the organization.

## IX. Leading Comments from Huguette Labelle

Margaret Biggs, President of CIDA and Executive Vice-Chair of CCICED during Phase IV, introduced Huguette Labelle, former President of CIDA and Vice-Chair of CCICED during Phases I and II. Here are the highlights of Huguette Labelle's remarks:

Why has this Council been so successful over the years? One reason is that it has enjoyed sustained support from the highest levels of the Chinese government. As well,

CCICED has worked on those issues that are most relevant to China. The Council's international experts remained committed and engaged because they felt that their input was being considered (also because they were learning much). Their task force and working group reports did not go into a black hole but were actually being used.

As well, the Council evolved in parallel with the broader changes in China. It focused on solutions that could actually be implemented. Its transparency has also been a factor in its success — the Chinese government has been comfortable reporting publicly the Council's proceedings and the implementation of its recommendations. The spirit of learning between the Chinese leadership and the international community has been strong and remains so to this day.

And what are the dilemmas or challenges facing the Council? One issue that China, like all countries, will face is what I call the “push back”— by industries, local governments, or investors — who want government regulations to accommodate their own special interests. A related dilemma is “policy capture” through processes such as high-level lobbying by special interests that wish to protect their investments or revenues as opposed to doing what is right for the whole country. To counter this pressure, CCICED can be a strong partner of the central government in supporting and implementing the right policies.

China is challenged also by the increased decentralization of authority to other levels of government. The national government needs to maintain the public good; otherwise there will be a cacophony of competing interests. There will be no central heart beating for the right policies, the right regulations, the right systems of control and implementation. With greater decentralization comes greater difficulty in ensuring that what is best for the country as a whole is implemented at all levels. We have seen this problem in my home country, Canada.

We also need to consider China's contribution to international cooperation. As we were reminded here today, often in international fora it is the lowest common denominator that achieves consensus, whereas we should be aiming for higher achievements. Countries often wait for others to act before they make a commitment on their own contribution. In light of the work that China and this Council have done, therefore, it is important that China make a positive contribution to these world debates so that they are less dysfunctional and better able to achieve what is required.

Another issue is how do we measure our success as nations? Relying on gross domestic product (GDP) or economic growth or stock prices is insufficient. We have to find much better ways of identifying the indicators for the best possible quality of life for our citizens. Of course, economic growth is important if we want to pull people out of



poverty — but growth does not always rescue everyone. We have seen a lot of inequity and non-inclusive growth around the world.

Many problems arise from China's rapid industrialization. I don't think any other nation has ever seen such speed of industrialization and expansion of consumption. We need to make citizens part of the solution. If China's 1.3 billion people become committed and support the right policies, I think we can have the greatest revolution that has ever been.

I believe it is possible to have a high quality of life and at the same time to reduce our environmental footprint. We need to introduce greater personal responsibility on the part of individual citizens, starting with youth who need a strong moral compass. The Chinese government has been remarkably open with its citizens about the major environmental issues the country is facing. This is tremendous in helping people understand what the stakes are. But people should not believe that only the government is responsible for finding answers; citizens themselves also have to be part of the solution.

The Council has set new standards for international cooperation. I have been privileged to have been part of this exceptional experiment which, let us hope, will be taken up by other countries. We need to celebrate this success, because it is a success of solidarity between countries, between institutions, between peoples. Our reward is to have been part of this outstanding experience.

## X. Leading Comments from Martin Lees

Margaret Biggs introduced Martin Lees, former Secretary General of the Club of Rome and CCICED member during Phases I, II, and III. Here are the highlights of his presentation:

In my view, the decision by the Chinese authorities to establish the China Council was not a sudden inspiration, but was a coherent step in the wider processes of reform and opening up which had begun in the late 1970s.

An international conference in June 1988 provided an opportunity — one of the first — for dialogue between the leadership of China and a group of international leaders and experts on the key strategic issues of China's reform and opening up to the outside world. We had the remarkable and unique opportunity to exchange views successively with the three top leaders of China — the Prime Minister, the General Secretary, and ultimately a two-hour meeting with supreme leader Deng Xiao-ping.

One point on the agenda of this 1988 conference specifically focused on the significance of environmental and resource constraints as a determinant of China's long-term development strategy. Out of this meeting emerged a program of international

cooperation called “China and the World in the Nineties.” This program, which provided the Chinese leadership directly with focused international advice and experience on a series of key reform issues, laid the foundations for the China Council.

It was in this context that three senior and distinguished Chinese personalities, in a letter of 10 January 1990, proposed an initiative to focus attention on the core issue of environment as critical to the future of China’s development, recognizing the important opportunities for international cooperation in this field. Two of these people are with us here today: Song Jian and Qu Geping. These two remarkable personalities have been for decades the pillars on which the movement towards a sustainable path of economic progress in China has been founded. The third important supporter of this initiative was Ma Hong, President of the Development Research Center of the State Council, who is regrettably no longer among us today.

Let me quote a few lines from this letter which was, at the time, a remarkable and perceptive statement of intent:

The Chinese Government has decided to invite a small number of international personalities to visit Beijing for discussions with the leadership about a major new programme of international cooperation on the conservation of the environment in China. We recognize that the protection of the environment in China is essential to the future of the Chinese people. We are also fully aware that the People’s Republic of China, which constitutes about one fifth of the world population, must actively take part and sincerely cooperate with other countries in the global efforts to resolve the serious environmental problems which threaten our planet.....

International cooperation and support will be critical to the success of our work...

We hope that the private high-level meeting will help us, in a spirit of openness and cooperation, to define a strategy and to initiate action which will enable us to combine economic growth, modernization and reform with the long-term conservation of the environment. This will be not only in the vital interest of China, but of the whole world.

It was on this basis of this Chinese initiative that we were able to convene a major international conference focused on “The Integration of Environment and Development” here in the State Guest House in October 1990. I would like to record that it was visionary support by the Rockefeller and Ford Foundations which made it possible to take this critical step towards the establishment of the China Council.

Song Jian, who chaired that conference, indicated that the Chinese authorities were in principle prepared to consider the establishment of some form of organizational arrangements to ensure that work on the important issues which were the focus of the





agenda should continue after the conference. After the conference Qu Geping was able to tell us that Premier Li Peng had authorized the creation of an organizational framework to follow up the ideas and proposals made at the conference.

I would like to underline the important role played by another key personality, Xie Zhenhua, then the Deputy Administrator of the National Environment Protection Agency. Under the guidance of Qu Geping, we together drafted the Charter of the China Council by March 1991. With the support of Song Jian and Qu Geping, it was approved by the State Council.

In spite of all this remarkable and rapid progress, the final step towards the establishment of the Council remained to be taken: how to find the initial financial support to launch the Council quickly and convincingly? In view of the long and positive relationship between Canada and China since the founding of the People's Republic in 1949, I visited Marcel Massé, President of CIDA, in June 1991 in Ottawa and asked him for the necessary support. Within six weeks he confirmed that CIDA would provide the requested CA\$5 million over five years to support the Council.

I would like to express my deep appreciation for this early and generous support which enabled us to organize the first session of the Council, here in the State Guest House, in April 1992. The sustained support of CIDA, which continues to this day, has also provided a solid basis for the work of the Council and a framework within which many other donors have now given their support.

Let me suggest some of the key reasons for the success of the China Council. In my view, these factors must be preserved to ensure the continuing relevance and effectiveness of the Council.

First, China's leaders are unusually open to considering international experience and advice. But, most important, they then critically assess the diversity of opinions and experience which is presented, and select and test those elements which are most relevant to the needs, the culture, and the aspirations of China.

Second, the Council's mandate and activities focus on the integration of economic development with energy and resource use and the environment. This balanced and integrated approach, which covers the wide range of connected issues related to economic development and environment, is crucial to the success of this Council. Development and environment are, in fact, two sides of the same coin.

Third, on the Chinese side, the Council is intended to bring together participation from the government-wide range of ministries and agencies engaged in the issues of environment and development. This cross-sectoral and multi-disciplinary collaboration on which the

Council is founded is very difficult, but it is increasingly needed to address the connected challenges of the modern world.

Fourth, the credibility of the Council's recommendations and suggestions depends on the solid continuing work of the task forces and working groups which develop sound proposals based on rigorous and extensive scientific analysis. This combination of solid scientific analysis and high-level access has ensured the continuing relevance and effectiveness of the China Council. The Council is designed to bridge the gap between science and policy — an interface of critical importance today, particularly in relation to climate change.

I conclude with observations concerning the critical challenges of the future where the Council can play a valuable role.

There is a need for a sense of urgency. The problems and risks we face are increasing in scale and intensity despite our efforts. In particular, there is an urgent need for effective action to mitigate the increasing risks of dangerous climate change and to adapt to its inevitable impacts.

Climate science clearly indicates that the scale of human activities, particularly of emissions, runs the risk of triggering irreversible and dangerous climate change. If we continue on this path, we are heading for a rise in global average temperature of at least 4.5° C by 2100 and probably substantially more. It is particularly important to recognize that the processes driving climate change are non-linear: we cannot therefore expect a gradual process of global warming giving us time to talk and think. We must prepare for sudden major changes which could have devastating consequences on the prospects for development in China and across the world.

The impacts of a world population of seven billion people today are already devastating the terrestrial and ocean ecosystems and grossly overusing the natural capital of the planet. As the population rises to over 9 billion in less than 40 years, it is clear that the present consumption-driven, fossil-fuel based path of economic growth is not sustainable.

Fortunately, this central challenge has long been recognized by China's leadership, first through the creation of the China Council itself and now in its commitment to reorient China's development onto a more equitable, balanced, and sustainable path. This new approach is reflected in the Chinese strategy for climate change, in the "12<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Plan", and in the concept of the Xiao Kang program, aimed at achieving an all-round prosperous society.

The restructuring of the growth trajectory of China and of the world economy to achieve equitable, inclusive, and sustainable development is the central vital challenge of



the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This will be a difficult task. We have seen that the pressures for consumption, supported by powerful special interests, will strongly resist the transformational changes which are essential. We should know by now that incremental change will not save us.

China can play a major role in defining the new models of growth and development, the new strategies, and the new partnerships needed to seize the opportunities ahead and to build the new low-carbon green economies of the future. And the China Council can play an important role in supporting the continuing transformation of China's development trajectory onto a sustainable path.

## XI. Leading Comments from Børge Brende

Margaret Biggs introduced Børge Brende, Managing Director of the World Economic Forum, former Minister of the Norwegian Ministry of Environment, and Vice-Chair of CCICED during Phase IV. Here are the main points of his remarks:

Martin Lees' talk confirmed that an anniversary gives us a unique opportunity to learn from the past but also to reflect on the important challenges of our time. The current crises of the global economy and the political space it has created allow us to ask fundamental questions about how the system works and how it does not.

This is an ideal time to initiate reforms. It is often the sudden unexpected events that reshape political and economic contexts overnight. In recent years we have seen 9/11, financial crises, oil/food spikes, the Fukushima nuclear crisis, and extreme weather events. Shocks and crises can spread further and faster than before — but so can smart ideas and new solutions. The next years will see the arrival of staggering amounts of new technology, especially in biotechnology and genetics, computer science, and energy and resource efficiency. Many of these new technologies will have highly positive environmental impacts, from reducing emissions to enhanced resource productivity.

But how to manage the energy poverty? Already 1.5 billion people globally do not have access to basic electricity, and there will be billions more of these people soon. How can we accommodate this but decouple it from rising carbon dioxide emissions? We need a policy that introduces new inventions and new technologies in the way China itself has already done in recent years. China went from almost zero to being the world leader in producing and exporting windmills and solar panels, and so has introduced these energy sources into new markets at a much lower price.

Throughout history change has always required a champion. We need leaders who know how to collaborate across sectors and continents, and who can articulate a vision of

what is possible. I believe it was this kind of vision that was driving the founding fathers of CCICED. The China Council is unique. Other nations should consider the experience that China has had with this institution with a view to establishing their own local brand of CCICED. However, any nation has to be brave to seek independent advice outside its own government corridors. China has shown this kind of self-confidence and courage, and evidently has gained from it.

Two transformations are under way in China: a move toward becoming both a conservation society and an all-inclusive society. CCICED is up to the task of providing the best advice on the difficult transformational path that China is following. Or, as Minister Zhou Shengxian phrased it at the start of the 2011 Annual General Meeting: “The realization of China’s green transformation will be China’s active contribution to the world’s development.” I am pleased and feel privileged to be part of a Council that can be a partner with China on this very important path.

## XII. General Comments

Margaret Biggs invited comments from Council members and from special guests. Here are summaries of the points made from the floor:

Having witnessed the Council in all its phases, I can see that the enthusiasm and passion of both Chinese and foreign members have not been lost. I underline what other speakers have said: although China has gained from this experience, the individuals serving around these tables for the past 20 years have gained a huge amount also. We will take what we have learned here and pass the message on to other places around the world. I do hope other countries will follow this leadership model — this inter-cultural, inter-sectoral dialogue that is breaking down the walls separating us from making progress.

We need to think beyond conventional economics. There is a mandarin term for “clean green growth” which implies we should reject the obsession with growth and GDP which is so evident in the conventional economic view. Instead we should try to bring in environmental costs, supplementary expenses, and the true value of happiness, human welfare, and a harmonious society. Harmony of course goes back to the days of Confucius, and perhaps the Chinese have been ahead of others in trying to define and establish new methods of economic measurement that would make society work better. The Council should encourage the scientists in China who are pursuing this because it’s going to be an extremely valuable contribution in the years to come.

CCICED has not only been informative in coming up with ideas of what China can do to improve its environmental record and its international cooperation; it has been equally



informative for us all. I have been amazed when reading the CVs of my colleagues to find that the China Council is always mentioned as an important item. And so it does in my CV too. We are all proud to have been part of this unique exercise.

“Ecological footprint” is an indicator that aims to supplement GDP which, as we know, has failed to measure national economic performance. We have not gone far with developing the concept of ecological footprint, but for China it’s important because often the impact of the Chinese economy is criticized abroad in terms of resource consumption. Some nations use China to excuse the fact that they themselves are not taking action at home. They point the finger at China for wrecking the world’s resources. This is dishonest behaviour, but all the more reason for China to introduce transparency about its resource consumption abroad.

We will lose a lot of tropical forests in the decades to come, essentially because of the demand for commodities such as palm oil, soybean, and beef. Soybean plantations, for example, produce per hectare about 10 to 15 times the revenue as sustainable forestry. We do not account for lost forests, neither in terms of carbon sequestration nor biodiversity, so we urgently need a system that introduces the valuation of these natural assets. It can be done by adopting systems and standards for the production of some of these commodities, such as the certification mechanisms of the Forest Stewardship Council. There are other standards for palm oil and soybean. The Council should look into some of these valuation systems.

Whenever the international members of CCICED happen to meet at a debate or a workshop outside the context of the Council, we always refer to our particular kinship — being members of the China Council. It’s a family, an affiliation, and we cannot but mention that we are members of this exceptional body. We are proud to be part of this international movement.

I’ve worked in all four phases of CCICED. As colleagues here have already said, it has been a huge privilege to work for the Council. Why did I do it? Because China is the planet’s “ground zero” country. Whether this planet gets through another century depends not on Europe or America, but on China. China is the biggest country, and so it is having the biggest impacts on the planet. It is the only country that can really decide the issues this way or that. Frankly, I do not work in my own country because I think it is pointless — there is nothing my country could actually do to help solve the issue.

I miss some of the features of the early Council when it was smaller. We got close and we discussed very frankly the problems. I feel we’ve become too big, too formal, too polite. I was delighted to hear Qu Geping say the truth boldly. That was the unique feature of the

early Council. We didn't hide the problems. We were here to find solutions. China's only sin is that it is too big. People might fear it because of its size, but China is leading the world in many areas of environmental protection; for example, China plants more trees than the rest of the world put together. Nobody can accuse China of not caring about the environment.

In the area of "aid architecture" there is disarray in the way donors and countries work together. CCICED however provides an excellent example of what works. For developing countries the major lesson is that unless policy-makers are serious, adopt a long-term perspective, and are consistent in their approach and open to new ideas, they are not likely to achieve as much as China has. This is an important lesson for donors too, because increasingly I hear the term "knowledge institutions" or "knowledge bank," but when you scratch the surface you find there is little knowledge being imparted. With the China Council there is a strong knowledge content which is provided in a collaborative manner. We need to think about how to use the donor community's limited resources more effectively, and this Council is a good example of what can be done.

### XIII. Closing Remarks by Zhou Shengxian

Margaret Biggs invited Zhou Shengxian, Minister of Environmental Protection of China and Executive Vice-Chair of CCICED during Phases III and IV, to deliver a special speech and summary on the forum's theme of "Sharing the Achievements, Embracing the Future." Here are the main points that he made:

China has gone through two periods of 20 years each, both of them momentous and tumultuous. The first period began with the 1972 United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm. China's government sent a delegation to the conference, which adopted its well-known declaration, the text of which actually includes a quotation from Chairman Mao Zedong. The original wording was that "mankind must never stop summing up its experience. It must have inventions, discoveries, creativity. It should move forward." When we read these words today, we find them pertinent indeed. That conference was the first meeting between the Chinese and the international environmental protection cause.

Soon after that, China convened its first national conference on protection of the environment. This meeting proposed directives on comprehensive planning, rational arrangements, measures to turn harm into benefit, and reliance on the population to work together to protect the environment and benefit the people. This event became one of the opening salvos in China's efforts toward environmental protection. In 1983, the second national conference on environmental protection was held in which protection of the environment became a basic policy for China.



The second 20-year period started in 1992. In April of that year, the Chinese government approved the establishment of CCICED. In June, Premier Li Peng led a Chinese delegation to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro. This was the second time that China's environmental protection efforts met with those of the international community. Since 1992, sustainable development has become a national strategy and plan of action for the Chinese government. Thanks to joint efforts involving our governments, our people, and CCICED, we have made environmental protection a prominent component of our economic and social development.

Over the last 20 years the China Council has received a great deal of attention from people at home and abroad, and has established its own distinctive "brand." The Premier of China each time has received Council members and listened to our recommendations, which have included many practical proposals for China and the world. The Chairman of each CCICED phase has always been a member of the State Council and the Vice-Premier in charge of the environment. This enduring, direct dialogue with high-level leaders is unique in the world.

The Council has made over 200 significant proposals and policy recommendations. These relate to issues such as pollution control, the circular economy, ecological compensation, and environmental management. It has engaged in over 100 different studies. Many experts have participated in these investigations, and they have written up over 140 reports. Many of the Council's recommendations have been adopted by the Chinese government and implemented. If we pay attention we can identify places in China's system of environmental regulations where CCICED recommendations have been adopted.

Furthermore, the China Council has trained a large number of people to help with the cause of China's environmental protection. Our senior experts have guided and mentored a whole group of young PhD students and scientists to join in these task forces. This gives us hope for the future. As new young people gradually come on board and older experts leave the scene, we can say we've achieved the sustainability of scientific research.

The China Council has pioneered a very successful kind of international cooperation and partnership in environmental studies. Over 1000 scholars and experts from all sectors, disciplines, and backgrounds have participated in Council task forces, as well as thousands more who took part in other ways in these activities. This is a win-win situation for everybody. Developed countries possess advanced knowledge about the environment and advanced technologies, while China has this huge market which needs these things. Through this window of the China Council a lot of knowledgeable and farsighted people have come here to work on these projects.



During the coming Phase V, where should we put our efforts? First, we should elevate our “ecological civilization.” What does that term mean? It’s not just about planting a few more trees, not just about preventing pollution. It’s a new kind of economic structure or form of consumption. It raises the whole issue of environmental protection to the level of a development path. That’s why the State Council has pointed out that we must use scientific and technical innovation to search for new, less costly ways to do things, with lower emissions, greater sustainability, and increased efficiency.

Second, we need to focus on the main issues in the transformation of China’s economy and society, that is, on the transformational issues. This requires strategic, forward thinking. On the one hand we must respond to China’s present reality, but also offer long-term guidance and direction. China is huge, and one kind of solution is not going to solve all the problems. One size does not fit all, and if we blindly copy certain experiences from certain countries, that isn’t going to work either.

Third, we need to focus on the trade of emission rights, pollution prevention, and environmental management — but particularly the protection of biodiversity. What is biodiversity? Biodiversity is life. It is our life. Like climate change, biodiversity is going to be another extremely important issue for the whole world.

Forth, we need policy studies on some very specific issues, for example, pollution by heavy metals, chemical hazardous waste, and environmental risk.

#### XIV. Closing by Margaret Biggs

At the conclusion of the anniversary forum, Margaret Biggs thanked the speakers, the participants in the discussion, Council members, and special guests. She made the following brief remarks:

Today we paid tribute to those who founded this Council and those who have worked during the past two decades to maintain and enhance and strengthen its relevance and impact.

Those of us here today remain committed to working on solutions to the sustainable development challenges facing China, and indeed the world, with the same determination and dedication as those who came before, and in the same spirit of friendship and cooperation that has been the key to the China Council’s special success.

As one of our guests has said when describing the advice, support, friendship, and collaboration characterized by the China Council, “It is something money cannot buy — it is more priceless than that.”