

## CCICED 2019 Highlights Tuesday, 4 June 2019

Delegates to the 2019 Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED) participated in a half-day field trip to Anji County, Zhejiang Province, to learn about Zhejiang's Green Rural Revival programme. They visited the site where Chinese President Xi Jinping, gave the speech that led to the famous utterance, 'green is gold.' Local officials presented the benefits that have derived from the promotion of inclusive and sustainable development.

In the late afternoon, delegates took part in the final session of the 2019 AGM of CCICED, where Han Zheng, Vice-Premier of China and CCICED Chair, gave the closing address.

### Site Visit: Zhejiang's Green Rural Revival Programme

**Dazhuyuan model village:** In the morning, participants first visited Dazhuyuan, a model 'Beautiful Village' located in the Lingfeng sub-district of Anji comprising 564 households and over 2000 people with per capita annual income of over USD 4,700. Participants were briefed on the village's efforts to create a beautiful rural environment that generates nostalgia and a clean and peaceful living environment, thereby attracting tourists and boosting the local economy.

A variety of activities were showcased for the visit, including a master sculptor and local children producing clay crafts; a live music performance using traditional bamboo instruments to generate sounds of the village, such as a farmer walking, a frog croaking, rain falling, a cowbell ringing, a bird chirping, and water running; and the development of local tea plantations, which have become a lucrative source of revenue in recent years.

Participants were told that, in addition to Dazhuyuan operating as a model 'Beautiful Village', the local families participate in a 'beautiful family' scheme, led by the local

women's federation. It was explained that families strive to achieve a 'five-star' rating through their enthusiastic participation in local cultural events; economic activities; demonstrating interest in intellectual pursuits such as reading; and exemplifying moral character. A bulletin board placed inside the village activity center indicated residents' responsibilities, such as maintaining cultural traditions, looking after land and property, stopping illegal fishing, and garbage classification. Other highlights of the visit to Dazhuyuan included observing China's 'toilet revolution' that has been expanding villagers' access to modern sanitation; the extensive integration of bamboo into the village environment; a previously contaminated stream that had been cleaned to provide quality drinking water to village; a patch of wetland with lush surrounding vegetation transformed from what, 10 years ago, was a gutter; a lotus farming location that generates economic and aesthetic value; and how local entrepreneurs had found success through operating different types of guest houses for tourists.

**Yu Village:** The site visit then proceeded to Yu village, located in Tianhuangping town of Anji, home to 280 farmer households comprising 1045 people. Participants were briefed on the historical significance of Yu in the context of China's green transformation, namely that it was the location where, on 15 August, 2005, Xi Jinping, then Party Secretary of Zhejiang Province, said that 'lucid waters and lush mountains are invaluable assets.' These words, it was explained, were the genesis of the idea that has been since crafted into the phrase 'green is gold.' Participants were told that these words were spoken at a time when the local area was facing economic and environmental challenges due to the closing of large mines and factories that had previously been the backbone of the local economy. The idea that environmental protection can underpin economic prosperity was said to have inspired local leaders to explore the green development path that has now made Anji



Dais during the CCICED closing plenary



**Shen Mingquan**, Party Secretary, Anji County, Zhejiang Province, China

county a model of rural sustainability and prosperity driven by eco-tourism instead of heavy industry. The surrounding landscape, as a result, has changed gradually from fields clustered with industrial facilities, including mines and a cement plant, back to peaceful farmland and rural households. Participants had the opportunity to view a monument that was erected to commemorate this history, along with an outdoor exhibition that provided additional photographic and written detail. Participants were told the villages showcased were just two examples among over 20,000 villages in Zhejiang province that had undertaken rural renovation and reconstruction programmes. After the visit, participants acknowledged this as a successful model of China's efforts to revive rural areas, while noting the challenge of replicating it in other parts of the country and world where natural endowments differ.

**Working Lunch:** Following the conclusion of the site visit, participants moved to the Anji Danianchuyi Conference Center for a working lunch. Erik Solheim, CCICED Vice-Chair and Senior Advisor, World Resources Institute, chaired the proceedings. He opened by stressing the importance of Anji as both the birthplace and a tangible example of the phrase 'green is gold.' He noted that Zhejiang is one of the best-performing provinces in China in both economic development and environmental protection, with five cities in Zhejiang ranking in the top ten nationally for sustainability. He praised Anji for its rapid transformation and ability to generate green jobs, particularly in the service sector and tourism. Solheim said that tourism is the 'most underrated' sector for generating employment, underscoring that China will soon become both the largest recipient and source of international tourists, and the importance of this happening in an eco-friendly way.

Qian Sanxiong, Deputy Party Secretary, Huzhou City, made welcoming remarks and introduced the city's achievements since President Xi Jinping proposed the 'green is gold' theory there in August 2005. As a city with an area of 5,880 square kilometers and population of over three million, he said Huzhou has so far enjoyed balanced development by growing its economy while securing environmental preservation. Qian said that, currently, as a leader in implementing the 'beautiful rural village' project in China, Huzhou is continuing its sustainable development path through combating air pollution and promoting organic products. He added that he hoped that Huzhou's successful experiences could be shared globally as useful references for promoting environmental governance.



**Erik Solheim**, CCICED Vice-Chair and Senior Advisor, World Resources Institute

Shi Yulong, National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC), China, highlighted the current status of rural development in China, explaining both achievements and remaining gaps. Shi reported that, on the one hand, the population living below the poverty line fell from 770 million down to 16.6 million between 1978 and 2018, and that by 2016 over 99% of villages across the country had access to paved roads, electricity, and Internet. On the other hand, Shi noted that although Anji is a success story, there are many parts of China lagging behind in terms of green development. He explained that a major part of this is the uneven distribution of population, with 96% being located on just 43% of the land, primarily in the eastern provinces. The key issue to address, he said, is the imbalance between urban and rural development, particularly the inadequacy of the latter. To illustrate, he noted that over 26% of village household waste remains untreated, and 80% of villages still do not have a sewage treatment system. Shi further underscored the scale of challenge ahead by emphasizing that although China has experienced rapid urbanization, there are still 564 million people living in rural areas, a net increase since 1949. One of the successful green rural development efforts he highlighted was the national reforestation effort, which, having returned more than 13 million hectares of farmland to forest, he described as the largest ecological project in the world. His suggestions for the future green development of rural China included: integrated urban and rural development plans; promoting green industries in rural areas; upgrading rural infrastructure and basic facilities; and raising public awareness about environmental preservation.

Shen Mingquan, Party Secretary of Anji County, introduced the three pillars of the county's green development strategy: growing bamboo and maximizing its full market value from roots to leaves by producing, for example, bamboo root crafts, edible bamboo shoots, bamboo furniture, and fresh bamboo juice; expanding the tea plantation sector, not only through selling tea products worth more than CNY 4 billion (USD 580 million) in a local economy that currently has a per capita income of CNY 50,000 (USD 7,239), but also through eco-tourism and film location services in the beautiful tea plantations; and electricity generation by a pumped water storage power station with an installed capacity of 1800MW to



Participants visit a restored lotus pond in Dazhuyuan Village

meet the increased demand for electricity from local and tourist populations. Shen closed by sharing his belief that a sustainable green development pattern has been achieved in Anji.

Participants then returned by bus to the Hangzhou International Expo Center, where the closing of the AGM took place.

### **AGM Closing Session**

Vidar Helgesen, Special Envoy to the High-level Panel on Building a Sustainable Ocean Economy, urged delegates to translate President Xi Jinping's 'green is gold' statement into practice, mentioning the need to step up climate action through countries' Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs). He noted upcoming opportunities for forging joint environmental commitments, including the second Oceans Conference and the fifteenth Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD COP 15), citing the latter as a chance to strike a new deal for nature. He called for scaling up solutions and encouraged China to share solutions with the world, drawing on its experience as the largest provider of technology for wind and solar power, electric transportation, and nature-based solutions. He proposed, given the long-term nature of China's global commitments, that Chinese environmental experts be posted to its embassies abroad in order to facilitate continuous dialogue on green solutions, for example, addressing environmental standards for global projects.

Solheim recalled how Sino-US talks in 1972 were helped by a move from Beijing to Hangzhou, where negotiations were completed that paved the way for normalizing diplomatic relations between the two countries. He stressed that 'the spirit of Hangzhou' is about finding solutions for the future, as the US and China had done on that occasion, as well as about exercising courage to try new approaches. He highlighted China's achievements in pollution abatement and waterway cleanup, adding that Malaysia and the Philippines have recently followed China's lead in rejecting international imports of waste plastics to their countries. He noted that the Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is both a high-reward and high-risk enterprise, which, if successful, could make an enormous contribution from China to the world. He stressed the importance of the BRI in helping countries avoid being locked into a coal-based paradigm, and expressed the commitment of the international community to supporting China in this.

Ban Ki-moon, former UN Secretary-General, recalled the achievements of the 2016 G20 summit in Hangzhou, when world leaders had discussed the Paris Agreement on climate. He expressed gratitude for the leadership of President Xi Jinping and former US President Barack Obama in presenting their respective instruments of ratification, noting that the two countries represent 34% of global greenhouse gas emissions. He expressed hope that the 'spirit of Hangzhou' would inspire those present to find good solutions to address the global environmental crisis, and thanked Vice-Premier Han Zheng, for his leadership as Chair of CCICED. He urged all concerned to return home and reflect on the 'great flood' of ideas, statistics, and information shared at the AGM, and to turn these into real policies and actions in their home countries and communities.

He expressed pride that the Paris Agreement on climate and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) had been adopted in 2015, during his term as UN Secretary-General, and announced that he now chairs the Global Green Growth Institute, which has 36 Member States, in the Republic of Korea, as well as co-chairing the Global Commission on Adaptation, which is soon to set up an office in Beijing.

Finally, he highlighted current challenges of providing access to safe drinking water and maintaining air quality, referring to the work of the Republic of Korea's National Council on Climate and Air Quality, which he also chairs, and the air quality partnership established as a regional framework under the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific.

Åsa Romson, IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute and former Deputy Prime Minister, Sweden, stressed that children's voices today are clearly calling for action on the environment, while calling on scientists and elders to provide knowledge to support this quest. She highlighted CCICED's mission of acting on the basis of science and knowledge, and highlighted the value of goal setting and a clear long-term vision. She affirmed the work of CCICED and applauded China's leadership in co-developing it as a unique platform for true knowledge sharing. She welcomed President Xi Jinping's recent statement in the news about the need to give greater attention to recycling and waste, noting CCICED's work on green consumption and highlighted that waste treatment is an important indicator of society's level of development.

Joyce Msuya, Acting Executive Director, UN Environment Programme, noted that China proves that ambitious, targeted and patient investment in sustainable development and climate delivers results that are good for people, the economy and the planet. Msuya invited China to bring greater ambition to sustainable development given that Chinese policies are powerful drivers for action across the world, noting that when China defends blue skies we all benefit.

Naoko Ishii, CEO and Chairperson, Global Environment Facility (GEF), expressed appreciation to the Chinese people for spearheading the paradigm of the ecological civilization, which, she said, is a unique and important challenge for humanity. Ishii recommended the inclusion of food system issues in CCICED's research agenda and assured China of the GEF's continued support.

Marjorie Yang, Chairman, Esquel Group, remarked that environmental and climate change issues are not just a task for government and NGOs but also for business. She highlighted that it is completely possible for manufacturing industry to go green, and that the business sector has an opportunity to show the world how industry and nature can coexist in perfect harmony. Yang added that greening is not only about corporate social responsibility, but also about generating business profits. She suggested that a balanced scorecard approach would be useful in recognizing and acknowledging businesses that are truly keeping their environmental commitments.



Participants enjoying their visit at Dazhuyuan village

Marco Lambertini, Director-General, WWF, welcomed the fact that ‘ambition’ has been a key word during the conference, stressing that business-as-usual approaches and ‘tweaking the edges’ will no longer suffice when it comes to promoting sustainability. He described 2020 as a year with several unmissable opportunities, including: securing a deal at CBD COP 15 that commits the world to addressing the key drivers of nature loss, namely unsustainable production and consumption, especially related to food systems; and applying ambitious green principles to the BRI that align associated investments with climate ambition. Lambertini also underscored that we already know many of the solutions to the global environmental crisis: what is required, he said, is scaling up and accelerating their deployment.

Andrew Steer, President and CEO, WRI, stated that many important documents will be prepared over the next 18 months to promote sustainability, but none are more important than China’s 14th Five-Year Plan (FYP). He stressed the importance of China hosting CBD COP 15, saying that although we are currently losing millions of hectares of tropical forest each year, China demanding deforestation-free commodities could be a ‘game changer’ for halting this. Steer suggested that if China gives an early indication that it will enhance its NDC ahead of 2020, many other countries will follow suit. He also underlined the importance of BRI being seen to be green, and the opportunity to align BRI investments with efforts by recipient countries to achieve their NDCs and the SDGs.

Liu Shijin, CCICED Chinese Chief Advisor, highlighted the important role that CCICED plays in advising the Chinese government, including the development of the 14th FYP. He reiterated calls for a ‘new consensus’ on green development that understands it to be not only about environmental protection and pollution control, but also about building an entire green economic system. He stressed that green development is not simply about patching up traditional industrial development but forging an entirely new path. Liu

also said that green urbanization should feature prominently in the 14th FYP in order to avoid locking in environmentally harmful infrastructure. He closed by calling for greater efforts to fight trade protectionism and unilateralism, saying that they make everyone lose and undermine global efforts to fight climate change and protect biodiversity.

Scott Vaughan, International Chief Advisor, CCICED, congratulated China on its hosting of a successful meeting. He noted that the 14th FYP contains many new concepts and ideas for translating these to action. He highlighted the importance of identifying coherent and integrated policies, drawing attention to the possibilities for linking the criteria on

various policy objectives, such as air quality and healthy ecosystems. He noted the relevance of aligning objectives of the Green BRI coalition with commitments under the Paris Agreement, and building genuine partnerships for a carbon-neutral world.

Han Zheng, CCICED Chair and State Council Vice-Premier, gave the final closing address, noting that the theme of the AGM, ‘A New Era: Towards a New World of Green Prosperity’, had practical significance. He emphasized that green development has become a world trend, and that China attaches great importance to building eco-civilization, which, he said, is now in fast-track mode, based on the concept of ‘Beautiful China’. He presented 2018 statistics illustrating China’s commitment to reducing fossil fuel-based industries, utilizing renewable energy sources, and increasing energy efficiency. In particular, he highlighted achievements in improving air and water quality, increasing protected areas, tightening environmental regulations and monitoring, and increasing forest coverage.

Han reminded delegates of China’s role in securing the Paris Agreement, and its commitment to accelerate energy-saving measures and environmental protection initiatives, especially focusing on the fight against air pollution and continuously improving land-use practices, including restoration of degraded ecosystems. He expressed commitment to deepening institutional reform in the service of building eco-civilization, and expressed China’s readiness to be deeply engaged in global environmental governance, including contributions to climate and biodiversity challenges, and fulfilment of its obligations as the host of CBD COP 15 in 2020. Finally, he affirmed China’s full recognition of the SDGs, and expressed support for the role of CCICED in developing recommendations for the government.

The meeting was adjourned at 5.57 pm.