



# **Global Governance and Ecological Civilization**

**Miranda Schreurs**

**September 2018**

## **Short Paper** **'Global Governance and Ecological Civilization'**

This short paper summarizes the main points raised in the two days of the CCICED Roundtable Meeting on "Global Governance and Ecological Civilization". It also draws on material from a background paper authored by Arthur Hanson and Knut H. Alfsen.

### **Executive Summary**

- Global environmental governance is failing, especially in the field of biodiversity where political attention is insufficient in many national settings. And there is a gap in global leadership. Unless these matters can be more directly and quickly addressed, targets will continue to be missed, with catastrophic effects.
- There is a tendency to overestimate short term effects (5 to 15 years), and to underestimate long term effects (such as those of climate change, biodiversity loss)
- Addressing synergies and the potential of co-benefits are very important topics for example between air pollution control and climate change mitigation. While there is attention to synergy issues at negotiating tables, follow-up action often is slow.
- When addressing synergies, it is important also to address trade-offs. These become particularly significant in land use decisions, urbanization, marine and coastal use, and ecosystem restoration.
- China has a capacity to turn challenges to opportunities, with many examples. This experience is relevant to other parts of the world, particularly for developing countries and as noted in the meeting for those nations involved in the BRI.
- China's commitments to climate change, the SDG 2030 goals (and earlier the Millennium Development Goals) are very important but increasingly the outcomes will require additional PPPs, other types of cooperation and increased involvement of civil society, not only within China but also with other countries.
- High profile opportunities such as the 2020 CBD COP15 in China are once-only means to set long-term, successful initiatives for transformative change. In this case to turn biodiversity loss to gains that are important for an ecological civilization in China and perhaps globally.
- China is uniquely positioned to contribute to a new era globally where 'Green to Gold' can become the basis for sustainable production and consumption. With new investment patterns for transformative change towards *One Healthy Planet*—free of poverty and with people living in harmony with nature.
- China can become a key player, and 'torch bearer'. But it cannot be alone in this effort. Various EU countries and the EU itself, Canada, and some other rich countries, plus many developing nations are eager to see such progress.

- More inclusive governance arrangements, greater investment by business, and participation by youth and children, plus gender mainstreaming are essential for new behaviour patterns to emerge.
- A green and sustainable world requires adequate green finance. China can help.

### **Question 1: How to enable synergies?**

- There are many types of synergies, e.g. between outcomes (ocean acidification + climate); procedural synergies between conventions, etc.; across sectors; between nations.
- There are also trade-offs, such as renewable energy systems affecting biodiversity (biomass, biodiesel).
- It is crucial to find the right narratives that people can connect to, and also convey a sense of urgency. We have been poor at communication. New approaches are needed. People with new mind-sets (e.g., the business community, young people) must be brought on board.
- Natural capital should be valued as an asset and more clearly understood.
- Knowledge sharing must be greatly enhanced, along with generation of new knowledge types and sources, for example, use of geospatial models, various outlook models and scenarios. Big data and AI efforts are needed to make better use of available data, especially for polar-regions, deep ocean and other poorly understood or vulnerable environments and ecosystems.

### **Question 2: How can China enhance its contributions to global environment and development governance?**

- China should invite business, civil society, and other actors to participate in global biodiversity governance, and establish appropriate frameworks ahead of COP15 (using precedents like the UNFCCC Lima Action Agenda as a model).
- China should recognize the impact on biodiversity, climate, and oceans of China's domestic and overseas investments, especially in infrastructure and urban development.
- China should apply the same standards in overseas investments as it does at home.
- China could establish a Global Fund for Nature.
- China can lead by example, especially in green financing, protecting national biodiversity, reducing climate emissions and addressing ocean pollution.
- It is important for China to signal its contribution to current, rapidly moving efforts to address emerging global concerns. A prime example is plastics in the oceans.

### **Question 3: What are the priorities for action to improve synergies in the coming years—to 2020-2030 and beyond?**

Some recommendations:

1. **Healthy Planet-Healthy People Concept for 2050.** This will require a systemic, transformative change in the human relationship to the planet. A healthy planet concept permits a people-nature focused approach that can be closely linked to

the concept of ecological civilization.

One possible way to communicate this idea is through the example of the food system. Currently, the production and consumption of food is contributing to planetary, ecosystem degradation: overfishing, conversion of forests to agricultural land, use of pesticides, loss of biodiversity. In addition, there are questions about how to produce enough protein for the global population of 2050. A systemic transformation towards sustainable production and consumption to secure food and health would also have positive impacts for climate, biodiversity, and the oceans. There are many other examples, such as energy and transportation.

2. China has the opportunity to lead by example, through coalitions, and through putting forward resources. The BRI is one case where this could be exercised. This involves systematic assessment of the impacts of each infrastructure and urban development project on the climate, biodiversity, and the oceans. If done well, this could be a transformative contribution towards a healthy planet.
3. China has taken on a central role as a torchbearer in global climate governance. China can further progress in this area and promote synergies among climate, biodiversity, and oceans by reassessing its NDC. In addition, China can urge that biodiversity issues be brought more strongly into the climate negotiations.
4. France pursued a major role with its presidency during the Paris climate negotiations. There is great potential for willing partners (e.g., Canada, Germany, France, etc., EU, developing countries) to form a coalition for the promotion of leadership: From the Paris Climate COP to the Beijing Biodiversity (or Nature) COP.
5. Modern technology (use of digitalization, big data, artificial intelligence) can be linked to the achievement of the 2030 SDGs, and in the creation of synergies between climate, biodiversity and oceans. This could offer China the opportunity to strengthen its industrial base in the green economy while contributing to the furthering of sustainable development.

## Introduction

The Roundtable, arranged by CCICED as part of its policy research program, sought advice from a select, high-level group on how China and others can enhance global environment and development governance by seeking synergies among existing global conventions and agreements. Synergies, as defined for this Roundtable, have to do with *mutual support and strengthening of governance processes*. Synergies are a *means* to improving environmental governance.

The Roundtable addressed the potential for enhancing global environment and development governance through strengthening synergies among the three issues of — climate change, biodiversity conservation, and sustainable ocean use. These three topics are the subject of CCICED's *Task Force on Global Governance and Ecological Civilization*, chaired by Mr. Xie Zhenhua and Ms. Catherine McKenna.

Three guiding questions guided the two days of workshop discussion:

- (1) How to enable synergies to achieve global goals and targets in a more timely and comprehensive fashion?
- (2) How could China play a greater and sometimes leading role to bring about such improved global environment and development governance?
- (3) What are some priorities for action to improve synergies in the coming years, first to 2020, and then over longer time frames (e.g., 2020 - 2030/35 and beyond)?

Progress on fulfilling global environment and development goals—set first in 1992 at the Rio Earth Summit—has not been sufficient despite intense efforts. Now, as we approach the third decade of this new century, we are once again facing a crucial crossroads. How to meet the ambitious agenda of the SDG 2030 UN Sustainable Development Goals, while addressing new challenges and demands regarding a planet under great ecological, environmental and social stress. The window for enhanced action and success is closing far too rapidly. The world's nations understand the problems and agree that 'no one should be left behind' as we seek solutions. And there is widespread hope that emerging green development and technologies can be transformative. However, as the Brundtland Commission noted in 1987—*the earth is one but the world is not*.

In the past decades, global environmental architecture has been strengthened with the formation of a range of global environmental agreements as well as the issuing of the sustainable development goals (SDGs). Multi-sectoral engagement and ratcheting-up mechanisms are embodied in the Paris architecture and many steps have been taken to strengthen climate security.

This progress is to be welcomed, but the failures in global environmental and sustainability governance must also be acknowledged. Concentrations of

greenhouse gases in the atmosphere continue to grow, and as global temperature rise, there are mounting signs that the climate is being negatively impacted. Record hot temperatures, melting glaciers and Arctic ice, extreme storm events, and drought-related fires should be a wakeup call as they are signs of what the future is likely to bring increasingly often. Biodiversity loss continues at a frightening pace as a result of deforestation, agricultural expansion, urbanization, pollution, and over-fishing. The 2010 biodiversity objectives outlined in the Aichi Targets were not realized and the 2020 targets are unlikely to be met. The world's oceans are threatened by rising temperatures, acidification, biodiversity loss, plastics, and other forms of pollution. The bottom line is, the environment is in trouble. Business as usual policies are failing us, and both nature and vulnerable populations are paying the price. The rate of change is too slow to deal with the urgency of these problems.

*Many things which need to be done for climate security have been done, but the rate of change is a problem. – Kate Hampton.*

*Business as Usual (BAU) is failing us. There is a need to find synergies and to combine our efforts to address such issues as climate change, land degradation, and biodiversity loss. Currently, there is a lack of ambition and of a cohesive integrated approach. And, not enough has been done to include different actors.*

*We are not on track to meet the global biodiversity targets at this point. Unless we manage to agree at a global level on a new strategy for the next 10 years, we have no chance of reaching the SDGs. Beijing 2020 should therefore become the Paris moment for biodiversity, and we need to work together to make this*

*We are here because we are failing. We have targets, and this is a sign of some progress, but we are still failing. How do we get more synergies for transformational change? – Cristiana Pasca Palmer*

These problems are impacting us globally. China too is seeing its natural spaces shrinking and with this a loss of key ecological services. Air pollution is contributing to millions of premature deaths, and natural disasters likely linked to climate change are taking a hard toll.

The window of opportunity to reverse these trends is closing, but opportunities still exist. Stopping the loss in biodiversity, improving the state of the oceans, and halting the rise and eventually reversing global greenhouse gas emission trends will require an escalation of political attention.

Through greater attention to synergies, clearer messaging, and broader participatory approaches (polycentric governance), global environmental protection both at the national and international levels can be enhanced.

## **China's Green Transformation and Global Environmental Leadership**

In the past two decades and especially in the last several years, China has done much to improve environmental governance domestically. There is a “war on pollution”, GDP is no longer the sole measure of performance, and green accounting is now enforced. Substantial efforts have been made to green governments at the local, prefectural, and central government levels. Many heavily polluting state-owned enterprises have been shut down and others have been required to improve their environmental performance. Environmental and climate protection are now the responsibility of the newly enlarged Ministry of Environment and Ecology.

Underpinning many of these changes have been the adoption of the concept of “ecological civilization” which links the social, economic and environmental components of sustainability with politics and culture. The idea of ecological civilization has been incorporated into the Chinese Constitution and Communist Party documents.

As the world's second largest economy with still the world's largest population, China's environmental footprint and has a global reach. China is becoming an increasingly visible player in trade, agriculture, development, and foreign assistance efforts in developing countries, ranging from Southeast and South Asia, to Africa and Latin America. Food, fuel, and other natural and mineral resources are increasingly imported from other world regions. Chinese development assistance is leading to the construction of much needed basic infrastructure in many developing regions. This South-South cooperation is to be welcomed but negative environmental consequences should be prevented.

Recognizing this and being aware of the impacts that global environmental degradation can have on China's economic and social well-being, its energy and food security, and its global image, China has taken on a greater role in global environmental governance in recent years. For instance, China has committed itself to cap its greenhouse gas emissions by 2030 at the latest and has adopted national legislation to back its NDCs. It was also among the first countries to adopt the SDGs 2030.

China now leads in many environmental technologies and has made substantial strides at enhancing energy efficiency and tightening environmental standards. Still, there are many inefficiencies in the system. President Xi Jinping has suggested that we will not get to where we want to be unless we do things better, more efficiently, and more effectively. China can play a major role (along with all other states) in promoting more synergies and more efficiency. China has the will to act and has considerable financial capacity. It also has an important guiding principle: the concept of ecological civilization. Ecological civilization is something like sustainable development with Chinese characteristics. Building an ecological civilization will require action at the global, national, and local levels and will need to bring in cultural and traditional knowledge. An ecological civilization framework can be linked into the 2030 sustainable development goals and targets, whether for environment, climate, or poverty loss.



China will host the Conference of the Parties to the Biodiversity Convention in 2020 where targets for 2030 and beyond are to be reached. In the next period, the development of the 14<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan and the Plan for Protecting the Blue Sky - Air Quality Control will progress. These are excellent opportunities for China to show leadership in global environmental governance and to set a framework for the years ahead.

## Changing the Narrative

*Keep it simple. Speak a language people outside can understand.* – Erik Solheim.

There are many important concepts which have been developed in academic and expert circles addressing environmental and sustainability concerns.

The concept of planetary boundaries developed by Johann Rockström et al., for example, usefully points to nine essential, inter-linked earth system processes which are critical to life on the planet: climate change, ocean acidification, stratospheric ozone, the biogeochemical nitrogen cycle, phosphorous, global freshwater use, and biological diversity. These earth systems operate within certain naturally determined boundaries.

They further suggest that it is useful to focus on improving our understanding of what the “safe operating space” is in relation to each of these areas within which humans can survive and prosper. Crossing these biophysical thresholds could so seriously upset basic systems that it could have disastrous consequences for humanity. As the concept of the anthropocene suggests, human activities are causing such major changes to earth systems that humanity could face abrupt global environmental change.

Concepts such as “planetary boundaries” and “safe operating spaces” provide the public and decision makers with valuable guiding posts for managing human activities. They have contributed to debates about the need for new ways to enhance sustainability. As concepts they are, however, enmeshed in a wide array of ambiguities and uncertainties that raise new challenges for governance systems. They are ideas that are not well known in the public and may be too difficult to communicate effectively.

Academic, legal, and political speech is often so specialized that it makes it difficult for those not involved in a specific area to understand what is being said. It is not only the many acronyms—the SDGs; UNFCCC, IPCC, IPBES, CBD, COPs, --but the complex and changing vocabulary—the anthropocene, planetary boundaries, tipping points—that may be part of what has made the communication of problems so difficult. The ideas embedded in these vocabularies are critical and necessary, but new narratives could help with communicating issues. Many people simply don't know what we are talking about.

There may also be problems with the excessive focus on the “economic” dimensions of issues. We are spending so much time focused on economic matters

that we are neglecting other values, like happiness and hope. These are not highlighted enough in terms of their contributions to our lives. We need to connect the narratives better.

There is an opportunity, a chance to inspire the world to act. The concept of ecological civilization is very hopeful as it implies living in harmony with nature. Perhaps we can move towards a positive narrative, such as a “convention for living in harmony with nature” or the idea of “a healthy planet”. Simple terms like healthy-planet, healthy people -- could help translate complex concepts like planetary boundaries into something that can resonate with broader publics.

*“One healthy planet” is the basic idea of putting the planet first... recognizing that we can't live as people without a planet. How can you argue against this?– Arthur Hanson*

Even a term like “biodiversity” is too complex for many people. If asked on the street, many people would not know what is meant by this idea. We should consider how we can bring biodiversity issues closer to the people, for example, as has been done in recent years by pointing out the importance of bees as pollinators essential for agriculture. We need powerful narratives that will capture people’s attention.

Urban greening, for example, is something that is close to the people. It is easy to understand and the benefits for people’s quality of life can be easily explained. Urban greening would also have multiple positive benefits for biodiversity, climate change, water management, health, and social issues.

We should consider how we can bring biodiversity, climate change, and ocean issues closer to the people by rethinking our narratives. This is beginning to happen with the recent attention that plastics in the ocean have received. Plastics are ubiquitous and are a symbol of unsustainable life styles. The growing awareness that plastics in the ocean are killing birds and marine life and may be making their way into the human food chain has given us a powerful narrative that can be drawn upon to stimulate change in our production and consumption systems. The co-benefits that will be derived for reducing plastic production and consumption, enhancing recycling, and finding alternative materials to plastics is enormous. It could help reduce not only plastic pollution in the oceans, but other forms of pollution as well. It could help reduce the loss of biodiversity. It could improve water quality, help to clean our beaches, and leave today’s young people and future generations with a brighter future.

*Our oceans are in urgent need for action... Plastic pollution poses a danger not only to our environment, but also to our health and economy. We haven't even mapped the impact on our health of microplastics, and we still need to do that. According to UNEP estimates, the cost is billions of euros a year. Fisheries, tourism, aquaculture, coastal communities suffer the most, and most directly. – Frans*

We should not be talking of species and wildlife trading but of loss of “capital”. Biodiversity protection can be an opportunity and solution to global problems (resolving climate, health, and agriculture problems). We would benefit from a shift in narrative from doom and gloom to a more positive approach: green is the new gold; biodiversity is good for the economy; biodiversity is critical to a healthy planet.

*What is still missing is looking at biodiversity as providing a value. We are not making the links. Species going extinct impacts our own lives—we don't do enough with this narrative – Marco Lambertini*

This change of narrative is critical as we need to mobilize political action outside of the communities where environmentalists normally meet. The concept of ecological civilization can help establish links among nature, culture, and heritage.

### **Promoting Synergies with Cross-Cutting Issues: The Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), Green financing, and food systems**

Existing structures often lead to fragmented approaches to problem solving. Problems tend to be treated in “silos”. In many governments, problems are divided along ministerial areas of responsibility. This fragmentation can mean that ministries may not always be aware of each others’ activities or may even work in such ways that they hinder each other in goal obtainment. The same problem of fragmentation can exist among multi-lateral environmental agreements. Each multi-lateral environmental agreement focuses on a specific set of problems. Overlaps between the goals of agreements are not always sufficiently understood.

Fragmentation can lead to inefficiencies and at times even to counter productive actions, when solutions intended to solve one problem actually worsen another, as was the case with the introduction of hydrofluorocarbons, a potent greenhouse gas, as a substitute for ozone depleting chlorofluorocarbons. While this problem has in the meantime been addressed through amendments to the Montreal Protocol, it is symbolic of what can happen when problem solving is done in isolation—with insufficient attention to the impacts on other issue areas. Through greater attention to both potential co-benefits and trade-offs environmental governance can be improved. A prerequisite to do this is having sufficient knowledge of potential fields for cooperation.

*There are many potential synergies linking China and the world -- across sectors, agreements, countries... There are also many cross cutting issues, including BRI, green finance, and food – Arthur Hanson*

*It goes without saying that, when you conserve nature and biodiversity through parks and protected areas, you can help tackle climate change and also help communities and ecosystems adapt to the impacts of climate change. – Catherine McKenna*

### **Green Financing and Green Infrastructure**

Today's dominant economic and financial systems were developed in periods when there was no awareness of ideas like sustainable development or ecological civilization. Currently, government contracts tend to be awarded to least cost providers paying little attention to the environmental and energy consequences of those projects. Thus, for example, when a new building is built, the long-term energy use of the building is typically not incorporated into considerations of the construction contract price. Rules and regulations that link environmental protection goals to the awarding of contracts could greatly speed up the development of green (environmentally-aware) infrastructure. Green financing could assure that government funds do not flow into projects that will be destructive of the environment and that is necessary to achieve a healthy planet.

### ***Greening the Belt and Road Initiative***

China's Belt and Road Initiative is arguably the most ambitious development project in the world today. It is similar in scale to the Marshall Plan at the end of World War II, when the United States helped to rebuild much of Europe. Today, China's efforts to build a region of connectivity and cooperation among many dozens of countries in Southeast Asia, East Asia, Europe, and Africa has gained much praise but also raised concerns.

The BRI's potential for promoting development is enormous. Yet, the scale of the project also means its environmental impacts could be dramatic. Investment in infrastructure comes with a lock-in for multiple decades. This makes it critical that sustainable development concepts and environmental impact assessments be integrated into planning processes from the start. Green financing requirements and an emphasis on green infrastructure could turn the BRI not only into a mega development project, but also a globally leading model of sustainable development.

This means, however, that there will need to be a political commitment on the part of the Chinese government to promote, and ideally to mandate, green financing and the development of green infrastructure. The BRI is a fundamental opportunity for China and its partners to demonstrate that a different way is possible. Not following such a green path could result in an exacerbation of the greenhouse gas problem, a further large-scale loss in biodiversity, and a worsening of ocean conditions. Leading by example and pressing on environmental issues-- this is where China's soft power could play a dramatic role, winning China global praise and assuring that the ideas embedded in the concept of an ecological civilization have the chance to take root outside of China as well.

Independent monitoring and evaluation of the BRI at regular intervals and for all major projects will be critical to assure that this well-intentioned mega-project does not further environmental degradation and biodiversity loss.

## ***A Healthy, Ecologically Sound Food System***

There needs to be a systemic, transformative change in the human relationship to the planet. One shift that can be promoted to move towards a “healthy planet” concept can be illustrated through the example of the food system. Currently, the production and consumption of food is contributing to ecosystem degradation and the dramatic loss of biodiversity we are witnessing today. This is as a result of overfishing, conversion of native forests to agricultural land and plantations, excessive use of pesticides, nitrogen run off from agriculture, and growing consumption of meat. As the world’s population is still continuing its upward march, food demand can also be expected to increase. Continuation a business as usual approach to food production and consumption could be devastating for the world’s remaining biodiversity and the condition of the oceans. It will be necessary to develop a more sustainable food consumption and production system in order to produce enough protein for the global population in 2050 of nine or ten billion. A system transformation towards sustainable production and consumption of food would have positive impacts not only for human health but also for biodiversity, the climate, and the oceans.

*We need to proactively promote the environment across the board. Not just the environment for the environment's sake, oceans for oceans' sake, biodiversity for biodiversity's sake. We have to find links and commonalities to achieve the maximum possible synergies between these, so we put in the same effort but*

To the extent that powerful narratives can be linked to cross-cutting issues, like the food system, many co-benefits could be reaped. As people relate to food, this opens opportunities to inform people about the relationship between the food system and the global environment. How we produce our food, the kind of food we consume, the amount of food waste we accept have impacts on air and water quality, biodiversity, soil quality, forests, and human health.

## **Partnerships and Polycentric Governance**

There is currently a void in global climate and sustainability leadership. Alone no country can move the global environmental agenda, but working together global sustainability and environmental initiatives can be moved forward. While the problems are great, many opportunities still exist. There is strong determination on the parts of China, the EU, and Canada among others to make progress. Risks are also an opportunity. The international community needs to work together to reverse trends to halt the loss of biodiversity, the pollution of the oceans and global warming and to promote the Sustainable Development Goals. China, the EU, and Canada have shown a willingness to act, and China has the potential to be a “torch bearer” in this process.

*There is strong determination on the parts of China, the EU, and Canada to make progress – Fana Li*

*As I say at home, air, water, animals, they don't know any borders—national borders don't stop them, and so we really do need to be working together to find solutions to global problems, so having Canada, China, the EU, the UN, and partners from around the world is critically important. – Catherine McKenna*

*One of the innovations in the run up to the Paris Agreement was the action agenda that really involved non state actors in supporting, delivering, and raising ambition across multiple complex issues and creating these cross cutting platforms of actors. That dimension of political innovation was incredibly*

Partnerships are not only necessary at the international level, they are also important between different actors. It is too much to expect government to be able to solve all problems themselves. There are insufficient resources and know how. Engagement of all actors – political, civil society, business, religious, and NGOs will be necessary if the global environmental risks are to be addressed effectively in the coming years. It is also critical that youth be engaged as it is their future that is at stake. The youth are also the most adept at using digital technologies and artificial intelligence, which can offer powerful new ways to tackle problems. Data collection and monitoring for the environment can provide the basis needed for making changes. The digital environment adds the possibility to bring stakeholders together around issues and to support strategic initiatives for the environment.

Partnerships between public and private entities as well as non-governmental organizations can be powerful change agents. One example is the World Economic Forum's global partnership, Friends of Ocean Action, which brings together prominent leaders from science, technology, business and non-governmental and international organizations to mobilize action to save life in the oceans. They have committed to work in key areas of ocean protection, including plastic pollution. This informal platform for action on SDG 14 (oceans) complements official multilateral-governmental efforts. Similar efforts could be taken in other issues areas, including for the biodiversity convention.

*We need agenda shapers to work together in ways that haven't been done before. Collectively we can create bigger impacts. – Dominique Wauchrav*

Another example is the Marrakesh Declaration for the Sustainable Development of the Oil Palm Sector in Africa. Here are one hundred partners are working together on biodiversity and habitat loss. A group of African countries came together to create a common market for products from sustainable forests.

### **Opportunities for Chinese leadership**

Three forms of leadership can be considered: leading by example, leading by providing resources, which is training, money and so forth, and then leading through coalition building.

1. Leading by example. In areas of production and consumption and how the international financial chain is having a massive footprint. Lead by example integrating sustainability into a broad range of economic and political areas, including the BRI. China is a player in investment in Africa, a resource rich continent. What China does is relevant for global governance.
2. The moment is mature for driving sustainable (green) investment. China could promote confidence building to drive green conditionality. It could also provide platforms for further capacity building in the BRI countries.
3. Leading through Coalition Building. Global environmental problems are too large and complex for any one nation to address alone. Partnerships are needed. Coalitions, however, also typically need leaders—country's which are willing to be first movers or to go beyond the status quo.

The BRI is a fundamental opportunity for China and partners (a coalition of countries) to demonstrate that a different way is possible, leading by example and pressing on environmental issues. By greening the BRI and pursuing sustainability using the same new (and higher) standards used domestically also internationally, China could make a major global contribution. The same could apply to other issues such as the circular economy, plastics, Arctic shipping, and Port State Measures.

China is leading in technology and environmental innovation. China could make fuller use of technologies to reduce emissions of carbon dioxide and improve conservation of biodiversity. China could take the lead in creating an international ecological data base (Northstar Satellite).

At the international level, there is growing awareness that benefits are to be found in pursuing synergies. UN Environment, for example, has made efforts to enhance cooperation among the various biodiversity-relevant multi-lateral environmental agreements, such as the Convention on Biological Diversity, the Conventions on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), RAMSAR, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). China could strengthen such efforts and in the process help to mainstream the biodiversity issue. One way to do this would be to integrate biodiversity more strongly into China's NDCs under the Paris Agreement. In addition, China can urge that biodiversity issues be brought more strongly into the climate negotiations. (Climate issues are already quite strongly represented in the biodiversity negotiations, but the reverse is not the case).

There are also synergies that could be pursued between ecosystem based adaptation and disaster risk reduction. Renaturalization can reduce floods, enhance biodiversity, serve as a carbon dioxide sink, and protect human lives and infrastructure.

Other potential synergies exist. The Made in China 2025 strategy could be linked to the achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals. Such an approach could offer China the opportunity to strengthen its industrial base in green energies while contributing to the furthering of sustainable development.

There are obvious synergies between air quality and climate change. Millions of people die prematurely in China due to poor air quality. Focusing on co-benefits can lead toward deeper structural transformations. Moving away from “silo” thinking through a focus on synergies will help in promoting structural change. Synergies can also be found between urbanization and climate change and nutrition and climate change.

In terms of the oceans, there are major challenges including overfishing, habitat loss, pollution from agriculture run off, and lack of public awareness. There are, however, many opportunities for improvements to the situation through international cooperation, technology transfer, and comprehensive legislation. Domestic issues that need addressing include harvesting practices, technology compliance, and restoration. China (and other countries) could alter practices by increasing the regulatory standards applied to fisheries, agriculture and conservation. They can send strong international signals by setting good domestic examples. Beyond governments, corporations can lend support as has been done by COSCO shipping.

Another area would be related to ocean waste. China is the world’s largest source of ocean plastics. This plastic pollution matters not only to oceans, but also to climate change, biodiversity, and sustainable consumption and production. These issues are dealt with as three distinct problem areas and addressed in different governmental departments. Greater issue-linkage could lead to multiple co-benefits.

The ecological civilization framework has been very influential domestically. The idea could also be linked into the 2030 sustainable development goals, the BRI, and South-South cooperation. The co-benefits would be enormous.

This said, it is still important to analyze the effectiveness of different cross-issue activities to understand what does and doesn’t work well. It could be informative to look at the actual modes of cooperation that are being employed across issue areas as well.

There also need to be over-arching bodies that go beyond individual multi-lateral environmental agreements to be able to identify negative trade-offs and potential co-benefits. Existing examples include the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and the Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES).



## **Additional Quotations from Day One**

*“We need a major cultural shift. We will be the ones who will pay the biggest price if we don’t understand that nature is fundamental to us.”* Marco Lambertini

*“There is an opportunity, a chance, to inspire the world with hope. The concept of ecological civilization is very hopeful.”* Harvey Locke

*“CCICED could create an updated international version of ecological civilization and integrate this with the SDGs into South-South cooperation.”* Zou Ji

*“Technology is exciting, but warrants a strong word of caution. Don’t rely on unproven technologies. We have a long history of technology failing.”* Anne TheoSeinen.

*“We need powerful narratives and inter-disciplinary panels to create real synergies.”* Beattel Jessel

*“One of the fundamental changes in mindsets that we need to have as a dominant species is to realize that social-economic systems are embedded in natural systems. Tradeoffs exist because we are missing a systems approach. While recognizing that we must work within planetary limits, we should go back and have a social- economic-ecological system approach.”* Cristiana Pasca Palmer

*“How can China use its political and economic power to strengthen global governance for sustainability? It can lead by example, integrating sustainability into a broad range of economic and political areas, including the BRI. China is a player in investment in Africa, a resource-rich continent. What China does is relevant for global sustainability governance.”* Åsa Römsön

*“The focus on biodiversity has largely been on the domestic situation, but it would be good to look at the impact of Chinese business activities outside of China.”* Li Lin

*“China is facing a challenging urban ecosystem situation. How can a better balance between urbanization and renewal be achieved? How can strong healthy urban regions be formed? There is a need for polygovernance models between the central and regional governments.”* Hans Mommaas

*“Norway overharvested fisheries far away from Norway because it applied different standards at home and internationally. By greening the Belt and Road Initiative and pursuing sustainability—by using the same new (and higher) standards domestically and internationally (for example, with the circular economy, plastics, and Arctic shipping), China could make a major contribution.”* Jan Gunnar Winther

*“The Biodiversity COP 14 will be in Egypt with a focus on innovation, energy, and health. This would be an opportunity for China to show its contributions.”*  
Christiana Pasca Palmer

*“China is open, willing, and able to think long-term. Other countries could learn from this process.”* Marco Lambertini

*“Greening the BRI could really help to bring a lot of people on board and reduce hostility towards it. There needs to be a more strategic environmental assessment of the BRI. Green finance needs environmental safeguards. Next steps would be to address carbon disclosure and carbon financing.”* Kate Hampton

*“China can leapfrog these problems and highlight the benefits of doing so. Changes in China can also be projected overseas. There can also be an acceleration of the transition inside China by promoting green industries outside of China.”* Kate Hampton

*“There is a Port State Measure Agreement for traceability and fisheries management. China is not yet very active, but China could pursue leadership in this area.”* Jan-Gunnar Winther

*“We need a Global Fund for Nature.”* Christine Pasca Palmer

*“DG Environment hopes to be working with China. We can really use leadership on the 2030 goals, like sustainable consumption. Studies point to the need for further action. There are win-wins.”*  
Anne Theo Seinen

*“In terms of BRI and the Biodiversity COP 15, there can be leadership through coalition building and practical suggestions. Learning from Peru and the Lima Paris Action Agenda... if a signal from Beijing were to ask for a mobilization of efforts, This could be a signal for the creation of an action agenda with Chinese characteristics which could mobilize key industries.”*  
Dominique Waughray

*“Millennials are living different lifestyles, and have a different attitude to work. They don't listen to their elders. They are making their own decisions. This will have*

*huge implications for how the world is going to look. Young people are deep into blockchains and how to decentralize the world. Everyone is on WeChat. They are going to less developed areas where blockchain opportunities exist. Could there be an organization of young people to act as a support team related to CCICED?" Zhang Jianyu*

*"The US has failed. Can China as a transitioning state take on this role with the ratcheting up process of the Paris Agreement?" Zhang Jianyu.*

*"We need to construct effective ecosystem space planning for different zones with different eco-functions and eco-services." Gao Jixi*

*"We shouldn't assume that the developments we have seen until now will continue. We need to prepare for new disruptions." Herman Ott*

*"There is a difference between valuing nature and commercializing nature." Bernice Lee*

*"There are synergies between the different areas. Two elements which should be emphasized more strongly are the take up of biodiversity in the UNFCCC negotiations, for example, in terms of bioenergy, land use, and in climate change discussions. Climate and biodiversity should be coherently mainstreamed. There is not enough exchange between IPCC and IPBES in the areas of agriculture, forestry, and fisheries." Anne Theo Seinen*

*"We need to link, short-, medium- and long-term goals to achieve global targets on biodiversity, climate change, ocean protection. Investment in infrastructure comes with a lock-in... What types of infrastructure do we want to prioritize? The power system will determine future emissions trajectories. If we change the energy mix, should it be towards a centralized or a decentralized structure? Such decisions will have huge socio-economic market implications." Zou Ji*

*"Paris to Beijing. Climate to Biodiversity. We could go for a Beijing—Paris moment for Biodiversity with the presidency of Germany in the EU." Anne Teller*

*"Industrial structures should be based on planetary boundaries." Gao Jixi*

## **Additional Quotations from Day Two**

*"We can use the Paris example of working together with voluntary contributions and non-state actors in the biodiversity sphere as well." Lidewijde Ongerling*

*"Addressing climate change is absolute priority, and addressing climate change really does mean getting the Paris Agreement to work." Patrick Suckling*

*"The Global Pact for the Environment is a very important subject that can really help to strengthen our international architecture." Virginie Dumoulin*

*"Let's make 2020 the moment we reaffirm multilateralism." Laurence Tubiana*

*"Biodiversity and climate change are two sides of the same coin. If we are very successful in climate change, but we miss the biodiversity challenges, this is not going to work." Daniel Calleja*

*"Previously, our idea was that man can overcome nature... This kind of thinking left us with a lot of negative legacies. So we have now replaced that with the concept of ecological civilization, where man exists in harmony with nature." Xie Zhenhua*

*"So we have clearly concluded that we have to change our development model to a green, circular,*

*and low carbon model. Only by a transformation can we reach the goals which we've set for ourselves, and achieve synergies and multi win-solutions. ” Xie Zhenhua*

*“We need continuous learning processes. We need to share experiences and lessons learned.” Zou Ji*

*“The biggest single thing that I think helped mobilize the business community when the COP21 was being planned was the New Climate Economy Report, the successor to the famous Stern report that completely changed the narrative in the business community around climate change. It made the economic case on why business should be part of this conversation clear and where opportunities would emerge. Why don't we, in the run up to COP15 2020 in Beijing, write together the new nature-based economy report?” Peter Bakker*

*“In the area of green consumption, China has a great opportunity to really make an effort and set a good example.” Zhang Jianyu*

*“I think one of the real reasons for optimism and one of the real opportunities we have is the global strategic role of China and the fact that China is evolving at home in a way that enables it to take strategic leadership globally.” Vidar Helges*



**Disclaimer:** This publication was produced with the financial support of the European Union. Its contents are the responsibility of the project implementing consortium and do not necessarily reflect the views of the European Union.



