



# First World Forum on Ecosystem Governance

# Beijing Declaration

## *Governing Ecosystems for Human Wellbeing*

Yunhu Lake Resort  
Beijing, China  
23-28 October 2015

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# Part 1: Beijing Declaration

During the 1<sup>st</sup> World Forum on Ecosystem Governance, one hundred fifty experts and specialists developed a broad understanding of the issues and the challenges preventing effective governance of ecosystems with broad acceptance that ecosystems and the services they provide serve a crucial role in meeting basic human needs (food, water, shelter) and wellbeing - the foundation to achieve sustainable development and respond to climate change. The participants provided several priority actions designed to promote more effective governance of the world's ecosystems.

## **Participants concluded that:**

Ecosystem governance is essential to achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals;

Nations are making efforts to integrate the Ecosystem Approach into their governance structure as a framework to respond effectively to the risks from climate change and the implementation of the Post-2015 Development Agenda;

Without healthy and diverse ecosystems, nations are at risk of losing the services that they provide, affecting livelihoods, cultures, health, and the economies of both men and women;

Nature-based solutions, such as restoration and reforestation, are critical to mitigate and adapt to climate change and to maintain biodiversity and the ecosystem services it provides, and thus help sustain those services to both urban and rural societies;

Stakeholders should value, conserve and sustainably use ecosystem services based on a shared vision of common goals in ecosystem governance; and

Nations should integrate nature-based solutions into their national economic development plans and national strategies to help facilitate the adequate allocation of funds from both public and private sources for implementing such strategies and associated actions, as China does with the "ecological civilization" approach, hlitour

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The World Forum on Ecosystem Governance is considered an essential regular event that convenes Future Leaders, experts in ecosystem governance, as well as policy makers, representatives of financial agencies, and businesses, to further advance the agenda of ecosystem governance; and

This Declaration is based on the key points noted in the Background that were highlighted in roundtable discussion reports (Part 1), the insightful and creative contributions suggested in the Future Leaders Vision (Part 2), and the Priority Actions forwarded from the Roundtable Discussions (Part 3). As such they are considered integral parts of this Declaration.

# Part 2: Background

The first World Forum on Ecosystem Governance was convened 23-28 October 2015 at the

## Part 3: Future Leaders Vision

Twenty Future Leaders, from eleven countries participated in, and contributed to, the First World Forum on Ecosystem Governance. Based on our experience in the Academy Seminars and participation in the Roundtable Discussions, we provide this Future Leaders Vision designed to



# Part 4: Call to Action

The following conveys the priority actions forwarded by the Roundtable Discussion groups. The Actions have been organized by discussion topic within the two broad themes. Editing has been limited to ensuring the core message of each Roundtable contribution is preserved.

### **Governing Ecosystems to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals**

#### **SDG Group 1: Conservation and restoration of ecosystem functions for human wellbeing**

This Discussion Group looked at conserving and restoring ecosystems and concluded that we need to have good baseline material about the current status of ecosystems, including the following:

- 9 The state of the ecosystem and drivers of degradation;
- 9 Social dimensions of ecosystem conservation, management and use, from both local to global scales, and short- to long- term time frames; and
- 9 Interests of different user groups with respect to the goals of conservation and restoration.

There are multiple dimensions of trade-offs that vary with the interests of different social groups. These occur among ecosystems, among goals and across temporal, geographic and social scales.

Understanding the resilience and dynamism of ecological and social systems requires us to:

- 9 Respect that ecosystems are not static (and a return to former states often not feasible/desirable);
- 9 Understand the changing links between function, management, and restoration;
- 9 Be aware of demographic change, e.g. rural to urban migration (with implications for rural labor to manage ecosystems); and
- 9 Understand business/investment timelines.

Human activities have led to ecosystem degradation, as well as social degradation (e.g. nutrition, rural outmigration). Restoration may bring back ecological functions, but this is also likely to require socio-economic restoration where employment, health, and education in restoration zones are considered, together with the importance of stimulating business and investment. But the interests and involvement of local people **prior to** decision-making is critical to long-term success.

Managing tradeoffs requires multi-sectoral coordination (e.g. due to different interests that



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9 Ecosystem managers should take stock of degradation, from loss towards greater resilience and this should include such issues as pollution, and habitat degradation

9 Governments should promote policies that:

- o Reduce conflict between conservation, development, management of nature for benefits;
- o Promote negotiation among interest groups to defining goals for conservation and restorations; and
- o Provide incentives to encourage ecosystem management by the people associated with the ecosystems;
- o Delegate management responsibility and accountability to local people;
- o Provide incentives for private and/or public financing of ecosystem restoration; and
- o Promote and foster communication among scales targeting decision makers from local to global levels within government and outside of government.

9 Recognize that multi-sectoral coordination is a challenge that must be addressed;

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9 By providing platforms for rural civil society to share their knowledge and to foster collaboration with others and sharing of information and knowledge between rural and urban areas, and the sharing of information with decision-makers and people who live in rural and urban areas; and

9 Establish a monitoring system and collect more information and data that would be made available to decision-makers and local people;

Urban areas should:

9 Consume less natural resources: fresh water, food and energy through heightened efficiencies and waste reduction;

9 Share more with rural areas that require more support and more positive flows, for example to provide technology to the rural areas such as solar energy, internet (education);

9 People should be encouraged to pay more for a better environment, through education campaigns that champion and justify sustainable decision-making;

Based on the issues identified and the array of solutions proposed, the following three key actions are considered top priorities;

9 Develop policies for green cities and green rural development;

9 Establish interregional and inter

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- protect people and environment from natural risks, and provide ecosystem services and cultural value in support of the SDGs;
- 9 Local and regional governments are encouraged to develop joint review mechanisms across departments to facilitate understanding, monitoring, and assessment of progress towards implementing nature-based solutions to sustainable development;
  - 9 The business community, including real estate and private water sectors, is encouraged to use the innovative nature-based solutions embedded in their business practice;
  - 9 Communication, awareness raising and education should be an important component to promote nature based solutions. Instead of introducing “nature-based solutions” as a new concept, link ongoing good practices at ground level to nature-based solutions practices by documenting, sharing, social marketing campaigns, perhaps even setting up an ecosystem improvement award programme, and involving young leaders;
  - 9 Nature-based solutions must be a driving force for promoting sustainable life in cities. The critical linkage between relevant issues such as food, water, and disaster management must be considered under the rubric of nature-based solutions; and
  - 9 Governance of nature-based solutions is context-specific; therefore, partnerships of urban-rural, in line ministries, intergovernmental, and cross-sectoral organizations must be fostered towards appropriate mechanisms of governance at different levels.

## **SDG Group 4: Multi-stakeholder management of ecosystems to sustain development**

The Discussion Group looking at multi-stakeholder management of ecosystems concluded with the following action points:

**Legislation:** We need to develop model legislation and guidance that provide and enable multi-stakeholder involvement in natural resource management and sustainable development that also ensures transparency. Such an enabling environment will not happen without a legal basis that empowers all stakeholders, and obliges government to engage all stakeholders. We should try and advance this cause that should also focus on appropriate and transparent allocation of rights and interests. This action should be supported by all participants engaging in political processes at all governance levels. IUCN and other participating organizations and individuals at WFEG can help take this action forward. However commitment is needed among those individuals and organizations. The IUCN Commissions should take the lead globally, and this needs to start as soon as possible.

**Education:** We must inform the public and raise awareness that can then lead to changes of behavior. Poor decisions that are not sensitive to environmental issues have been made at many levels in the past. This work needs to be undertaken by local people, scientists, civil societies, NGOs, volunteers, and the private sector. This will be done through creating learning platforms to share and to contribute, and training courses need to be developed in local languages to be implemented widely and with different sectors.

**Coordination mechanisms** are needed so we should adopt a process that encourages the participation of multiple stakeholders. This will help build trust and mutual understanding, accountability, awareness, and be able to bring added value into the process. This should be

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carried out by local people and scientists, civil societies, NGOs, volunteers, and the private sector. This will be done through encouraging bottom-up and top-down participation, and also by using the media.

### **SDG Group 5: Investments in ecosystems to sustain development**

This Discussion Group, looking at investing in ecosystems to sustain development, recommended four packages of action, all of which need to be taken into account:

9 Numerous good practices exist across the world, including in China; and

9 States have already made commitments across the world, notably – CBD 0 Td o-1(D 09)4.3 Tc 0 [e

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- x Establish legal instruments (with incentives and enforceable penalties);
- x Increase awareness of stakeholders of their rights vis a vis



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9 Identify actors, entry points and relevant modes of communication among government,

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- 9 Establish a Responsible Cities Standard, where we recognize that a growing global population and urbanization is the major challenge in the maintenance of global ecosystem services and a significant driver of global climate change. The future for a sustainable planet will rely on cities taking responsibility for their overall impact on ecosystems within and beyond city boundaries. This will require:
- o Establishing criteria for a responsible city that recognizes sustainability within and beyond the city boundaries. The criteria to include the following:
    - f Ecological footprint both on temporal and spatial scale – what resources they use and where they come from;
    - f Recognize and invest in the ecosystems that sustain that city; and
    - f Participate in a global reporting mechanism; and
  - o Call for our hosts and WFEF partners to convene a summit for responsible cities at the WCC in Hawaii in 2016.

### **CLC Group 5: Financial and economic consequences of climate change**

This Roundtable Discussion identified the following issues:

- 9 Current national economic policies and practice (irrespective of ideological underpinnings) are increasingly ill-equipped to respond to the uncertainties, shocks and extremes of climate change;
  - 9 The continued course of action will not only exacerbate the impacts of climate change but will also limit future economic policy options; and
  - 9 These conditions will have significant implications for both public sector policy-making and private sector investments. Delayed action foregoes the potential of jointly
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## **Communication associated with both themes**

Better communications are needed along with a common language about nature based solutions, and to use the language to promote human behavioral change at all levels from local to national to international.

**In order to promote change there is need to:**

**9** Support actors and change agents at all level;

9

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- 9 Higher levels framework policies and legal mechanisms that empower levels of responsibility and accountability;
- 9 Governance frameworks that are aligned to the level of ecological complexity, realize importance of societal benefits, and temporal stability;
- 9 Creation of systems that are within scale, and inherently adaptive; and
- 9 Apply the cultural imperative in analyzing socio-ecological systems, for example the Society on Ecological Restoration work on the importance of culture.



# Part 6: Key contributors

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The State Forestry Administration of the Peoples Republic of China (SFA)  
The Peoples Government of Beijing Municipality  
Asia-Pacific Network for Sustainable Forest Management and Rehabilitation (APFNet)

## **Forum Co-Hosts**

China Green Carbon Foundation (CGCF)  
Eco-Forum Global  
China Biodiversity Conservation and Green Development Foundation (CBCGDF)

## **Forum Supporters**

Zhongli Sci-Tech Group  
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