

This subject is extremely timely. This Council meeting comes on the heels of the tenth meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity held last month in Nagoya, Japan, which concluded with a renewed political commitment to safeguard the diversity of life on our planet.

2010 is also the year when we started to when

Maintaining species genetic resources and healthy ecosystems—known together as biodiversity—is a crucial pillar of the green development of modern China.

Over the past three decades, China has made significant strides in stemming the loss of its rich and unique biodiversity. The results of the vast effort and expenditure made in reforestation are apparent in both cities and the countryside.

The country's nearly 3,000 nature reserves cover an impressive 16 percent of its territory. Other investments in fire control, combating desertification and enforcement of wildlife laws, to name just a few, are also beginning to show positive results.

However, as with other countries, China's 2010 targets for reducing biodiversity loss have been only partially met. The pace of change affecting the landscape of China has been extremely rapid, with multiple pressures ranging from urban sprawl to ever accelerating climate change. One result is that biodiversity continues to be irreversibly lost and many ecosystems are becoming degraded to such an extent that they no longer deliver the vital services they once provided.

Ecosystem services ~~There is~~

species that help control pest invasions, such as insect-eating birds and bats, frogs and dragonflies, largely disappear.

Making a shift towards more sustainable agricultural practices can improve both China's food security and biodiversity. Traditional techniques used on Chinese farms, for example involving a mixture of crops and farm animals— can help preserve the health of ecosystems. Policies that promote biodiversity in agricultural landscapes, such as payments to farmers for bee keeping, are also worth considering. According to the TEEB report, bee keeping generates US\$213 million annually in the small country of Switzerland and the total economic value of insect pollination worldwide is estimated at €153 billion.

Rice terraces and other traditional agricultural landscapes are part of China's cultural heritage. Preserving these traditional landscapes, farmlands and associated woodlands will ensure a broader global recognition of their value and improve the wellbeing of the people that maintain them.

Teaching a Man How to Fish...Sustainably

Fish provide an extremely important source of protein in the diet of most Chinese, with average per capita consumption of over 26 kilograms per year. At the moment, however, many important fisheries are close to collapse through overexploitation, pollution and alien species invasions.

Chemical runoff is threatening more than half of Chinese lakes, while extensive "dead zones" plague important fishing areas along the coast. Almost all water bodies are infested with invasive alien fish and crustaceans escaping from fish farmers, even in nature reserves. Several formerly important commercial species of native fish are now locally extinct. One third of the country's freshwater systems are polluted so badly that they are not even suitable for fish.

The precarious situation facing the future of fishery in China is, sadly, mirrored around the world where most commercially valuable fish stocks are over exploited to the extent that they underperform by US\$50 billion annually.

One way of dealing with this global problem is through the establishment of marine and freshwater protected areas, as well as "no take" zones. For example, in the Yangtze River, fish stocks have been declining over the past decades. Here, a moratorium of a few years on all fishing could be both feasible and beneficial in the long run, as the river now accounts for only a tiny fraction of China's fish production. Besides, according to Chinese experts, compensation payments would only be required for some 100,000 people.

China's oceans and coasts play a vital role in socioeconomic development and improvement of public health and welfare. The marine economy is one of the fastest growing sectors of the Chinese economy.

The Nagoya Biodiversity Summit set a new ambitious global target for marine protected areas by 2020, which represents a tenfold increase over the rough 2006 level.

Experience from various parts of the world has demonstrated that protecting some areas of the sea greatly enhances the total production of fish, by providing them a sanctuary where they can breed and grow.

By strengthening its current network of marine reserves, China would make a wise investment in the future health and productivity of marine ecosystems.

are also far more resilient to the impacts of a changing climate. They also provide many co-benefits, such as disaster prevention, making China's investments in forest conservation both wise and profitable.

Conversely, monoculture— or single-species— forest plantations are biodiversity deserts. Yet foresters in China still much prefer to make new plantations, seeking the larger budgets that are provided for