

Speech at the Summary Session of the Global Forest Trends Symposium

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Distinguished Participants, Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am honored to be invited by the organizer to make a speech before the conclusion of this Symposium. I came here in the name of the co-chair of Forest/Grassland Taskforce of CCICED, so I think it will be appropriate to make a brief introduction of CCICED at first. The full name of CCICED is the “China Council of International Cooperation on Environment and Development”. It was establishment according to the initiatives of some international prominent figures and Chinese government in 1992. Its main task is to provide advices and policy suggestions in related fields to the Chinese Government. Some working groups and task forces in different fields have been organized under CCICED. In recent years, the Chinese Government has proposed and pushed forward the Great West Development Strategy, in which the forest and grassland restoration is an important part, including the Natural Forest Protection Program (NFPP) and the Cropland Conversion to Forest/Grassland Program that have attracted world attention. In accordance to this a new Forest/Grassland Task Force was established under CCICED in 2000, and Dr. Uma Lele and I were appointed as the co-chairs of this task force, and Jintao Xu its secretary. Dr. Mafa Chipeta, he is also present here, is one of the international member of the task force. Since the topics of this Symposium are very close to that of our Task Force ’s interest we all came here to get the chance to listen to all the speakers with competent expertise in this Symposium.

After this brief introduction in Chinese to explain why we are here, I’d like to use English for my later presentation. I think it will be more convenient for our international participants, it will be easier for our simultaneous translators to translate from English to Chinese, and my simple English can be easily understood by our Chinese colleagues, especially of younger generation.

It’s my pleasure to participate this international symposium on market-driven forests trends towards sustainable forest development. I came here mainly for listening to all your presentations in order to get more information and to learn your experiences. Great thanks to all of you for that with your help I really have reached my own target.

I apologize for not having time to prepare anything in written form to contribute to this symposium. I only bring with me a newly published book titled “China’s Forest Resources and Sustainable Development ”. It is one of the books in a series of monographs regarding sustainable development of natural resources, including water, land and forest resources. This book was written by a team of authors under my guidance performed as the chief editor and chief author. It’s too heavy to carry, so I have brought only one book and I’d like to send it to the local host of this symposium---The Forestry Department of Anhui province as a token of my appreciation of their effort to make the symposium successful.

It is supposed that Uma and me should summarize the 2 days symposium, but it is difficult for me to do so. The topics covered were too broad for me to grasp in short time. Uma is much better than me to do so, so I confine my presentation to just delivering some remarks before finalizing this symposium.

First of all, on the background of global forest trends China is facing really very serious challenges, which have been exposed by madam Wang Xuan in her yesterday’s presentation. The strategic effort of Chinese government to meet these challenges, the target of its action plan is rather ambitious. Nevertheless, there are big rooms for improvement in the aspects of policy formation and its implementation. I think you are quite aware that China is quite specific in terms of very long history of deforestation and very large population that the limited natural resources have to support their survival. The forest cover rate has been reduced in the course of 5000 years of long history before 1949 from about 50-60% to some 12%.It is not easy for us to raise the rate from 12% to 16.5% for the last two decades. But the productivity and quality of forest resources remain low or even decreasing. The exploitable mature timber resource has been exhausted. Yesterday somebody asked whether the forest inventory data in China are correct and reflecting the reality. I would answer to this “yes” because these figures were calculated on the database collected in the fields using the multiple layer sampling technique on about 200 thousands inventory sampling plots. Maybe somewhere we got the false data because of various reasons, but on the whole the forest inventory data are scientifically based and can be trusted upon. Our strategic consideration and policy formation have been made mainly on the base of these forest inventory figures.

Secondly, with such relatively small forest resource, very low per capita timber consumption and substantially deteriorated environment in some regions, what should we do now. The state leaders and the advanced part of the people are quite aware of the ecological problems in China and have decided to restore the environment by means of forest and grassland rehabilitation. The surplus food and economic power accumulated during last decades of development gave the chance to do so. That are good news for all of us. But how to solve the problems associated with this advancement, e.g. The Natural Forest Protection Project as the key measure to protect the biodiversity and to accelerate the

recovery of the already damaged forest resources at the same time has many negative impacts on the logging employees and forest community. Some questions have been raised. Is the logging ban the only solution to protect the natural forests? Is it wise or reasonable to implement this policy so bluntly in such a large scale? How long should the logging ban be lasted and when it can be lifted in the future? Should we do something now to prepare the base for sustainable use of forest resources? Could the ecological benefits got by the NFPP be compensated sufficiently in the market system? Besides, I'd like to make one additional comment, that the illegal cutting in neighbouring countries and smuggling across border cannot be considered as the impact of NFPP. It is the matter of completely another category relevant to custom control and social conditions in other countries. Nevertheless, the Chinese government should be responsible to take measures, as stated yesterday by IKEA, to promote sustainable forest development in our own country as well as in neighbouring countries. In all these aspects we need your competent expertise for reference, and we have really got much from your presentations and discussions.

Thirdly, regarding timber demand and supply in China we are really in difficult position. For ecological reasons the protected area of natural reserves and alike should be further expanded, the logging ban in natural forests will be insisted for quite a long time, the cutting quota in other regions will be further reduced. Then, where we can get enough timber to meet the demand, that is increasing quite rapidly as people's living condition is getting better and the educational level in getting higher. And, as has been stated yesterday, timber is the renewable, recyclable and biodecomposabe material, which is ecologically friendly and should be more used in the future. What should we do to make up the great gap between demand and supply? Can we wholly rely upon the imported timber? In one international conference I've heard the talking about the position of East Asia countries, including China, Japan and Korea, as the "green holes" that can absorb all the surplus timber exporting capacity in the world. Is this situation rational and should it be maintained? And for this import we are paying a large amount of currency, maybe we are not afford to in the long run, if you consider the still low average income level in China(about 800 U.S.D per capita). Somebody have suggested that we should rely mainly upon our own resources with emphasis on forest plantations. But how large the plantation area should be? Is there enough area of land with good site index suitable for forest plantations? What to do with the negative side of ecological defect of man-made forests, usually monoculture with low biodiversity and waterholding capacity? And then who will be the main investor for this undertaking and what kind of models of development is suitable for this? Is the community forestry the right answer or we should encourage the investment from the large companies in cooperation or partnership with the local communities? We do have in China both forms, some of them are successful, others are not. We are quite sure we need further works to improve their performance. We have heard these days in the Symposium various opinions and suggestions, which are valuable and can be taken under consideration.

I've just listed several of the critical problems and challenges we are facing. The real problems may be ten times of these that I am not in position to fully expose in such a short time. I am glad that for many of the problems you have given us your advises and suggestions. That really help us a lot. For this reason I sincerely thank you all for your extensive information and broad discussions. that meet our earnest expectations for this symposium. Special thanks to Forest Trends for your very good initiative and great effort to convent this symposium. On occasion of the conclusion of the symposium I wish you all a good stay in the beautiful area of Huangsan and good journey when you back home. Thank you.