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Jade Mountain Forum on Sustainable Environment

National Cheng Kung University (NCKU) Sustainable Environment Research Center held the “2008 Jade Mountain Forum on Sustainable Environment” from April 19th to 20th. Almost a hundred scholars and experts in the sustainable environment field, including those from Canada, Australia, Japan, Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan, participated in this event; among them were Dr. Dennis Steffensen, Director of Australia Water Quality Center, Mr. Grant Anderson from Gartner Lee Limited(Canada), Prof. Man Chi Lo from Hong Kong University of Science and Technology, Prof. Han-ping Fang from University of Hong Kong (Dept. of Civil Engineering), Prof. Ginro Endo and Prof. Hideki Harada from Japan Tohoku University, Prof. Jiun-hua Jeng (CEO of ISSE, Singapore), Prof. Jing-yuan Wang from Singapore Nanyang Technological University, etc. The participants

also signed the “2008 Jade Mountain Declaration on Sustainable Environment,” in hope that, through global alliance and local activities, more people would participate in the movement for sustainable environment.

The Forum included 12 seminars and discussions, as well as announcement of the declaration at the top of Jade Mountain on the Earth Day. The seminars were based on “Sustainable Environment”; the three main themes included Safe and Clean Water Environment, Site Remediation and Hazard Prevention, as well as Green Energy and Resources. Topics discussed involved public water management, safety of water supply, sustainable water resources, water recycling, site remediation and redevelopment, biofuels, energy conservation, and other topics that were closely related to everyday life. Through speeches and exchange of opinions, industry, academia and research institutes were able to discuss and brainstorm the future research focus, application,

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and collaboration for a sustainable environment.

In addition, on April 22nd, the Earth Day, Prof. Zu-en Chang (former Minister of Environmental Protection Administration) led a team of 30 scholars from abroad to climb Mt. Jade, and announced the 2008 Jade Mountain Declaration on Sustainable Environment. The content stated that, the sustainability of the Earth had come to face serious challenges, environmental protection specialists such as ourselves, should take on the responsibility; at the top of Jade Mountain, we declared to have common ideal and action toward environmental

conservation; our goal would be “low carbon, low risk, zero waste”; through global alliance, local activities, and persistence, together we would build a sustainable environment to live on.



Mt. Lulin of Taiwan Became International Atmospheric Research Partner

Increasing concentration of organic mercury in the ocean is closely related to the concentration of elemental mercury and mercury chloride in the atmosphere. The harmful effects of atmospheric mercury had been invisible, but it recently started to catch global attention. As a result, the superior geographic location of Lulin Atmospheric Background Station (LABS) made it become a significant research partner in the world.

Mercury is the only heavy metal that can exist both in liquid and gaseous form in nature; 95~99% exists in the atmosphere as elemental mercury; a small percentage of mercury would dissolve into water and soil through rain and deposition. Through reactions by bacteria and organic materials, mercury would become methyl mercury. Although methyl mercury could be metabolized, but the rate of metabolism is generally slow and it could accumulate

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through the food chain. Therefore, predators such as sharks and tuna have been proven to contain high quantities of methyl mercury.

If too much methyl mercury is ingested and accumulated in human, it could result in hydrargyrisms. Over consumption of mercury would affect the development of cranial nerves; result in slow-moving and nephropathy in adults, cause damage to intelligence, as well as physical or mental developments in children. Pregnant women or breast-feeding mothers could pass the mercury to the fetus or the baby and result in neuropathy, delayed development, etc.

Due to the harmful effects of mercury on human, in January of 2001, US Food and Drug Association (FDA) published a list to warn pregnant women or women preparing for pregnancy to avoid the consumption of shark, sailfish, tilefish, king mackerels, or other large predator fishes. In 2003 tuna was added to the list.

Deep-sea fish were found to contain high levels of methyl mercury, which was a result of increased atmospheric mercury concentration. Concentration of atmospheric mercury has been closely related to human economy and industrial activity. Concentration of mercury in the atmosphere, measured in parts per billion (ppb), could be increased million times through the

food chain, so that when it reached inside a human body, it would be measured in parts per million (ppm). In recent years, the damage of atmospheric mercury to human body has become a global issue and has attracted significant international attention.

Professor Gui-rung Hsu from National Central University, Department of Atmospheric Sciences, indicated that China produced the most atmospheric mercury in the world. Each winter, the high levels of atmospheric mercury would follow the cold air mass and northeast monsoon to impact Taiwan and the Pacific area. Although the effects of deposition by atmospheric mercury in organisms would require further research, it remained as an important issue.

With Taiwan's great geographical location, and the help of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), the Environmental Protection Administration (EPA) had commenced the activity of LABS in April of 2006. LABS would be the highest ABS in East Asia, with an altitude of 2,860 meters. One of its most important missions was to monitor the total atmospheric mercury concentration in the air; data gathered from such monitoring would be very important for international research. EPA indicated that the atmospheric mercury concentration data would become the

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international basis of mercury reduction, and LABS would be expected to provide significant contribution to international environment conservation and preservation of the ecosystem.



Council of Agriculture (COA) took a controversial stand on Coral Exploitation Licenses

On April 9th, the Council of Agriculture (COA), Executive Yuan, legalized 96 coral exploitation boats. Sing-Hwa Hu, COA deputy minister, pointed out that in order to manage more effectively and to protect both the livelihood of the fisherman and natural resource, COA amended the “Regulations for Coral Fishing Vessels” on May 22nd, which became effective on May 24th, and opened up 5 locations for coral exploitation.

These 5 locations were 12 nautical miles from shore, with a total area of about 7,811 square kilometers. The Fishery Agency of the COA signed contracts with coral fishermen; they were requested to install Vessel Monitoring System (VMS) and to write fishing logs. The exploited coral would be publicly traded through the designated fish market. Each boat was allowed to catch up to 120 kilograms per year, and the number of permitted boats would

decrease each year starting at 96 boats. The permits were valid for one year, and would be immediately canceled in case of any regulation violations. Dah-wen Hsieh, Administrator of Fishery Agency, also promised to investigate the current situation and maintain the current scale with strict management. Contracts would be signed with the ship owners every year, and gradually more of the boats would be purchased by Fishery Agency.

President of Yilan County Precious Coral Fishing Association indicated the Precious Corals (red corals) in deep sea were open for exploitation in countries like Japan, Italy, and Mediterranean countries. Taiwan has been exploiting Precious Corals for more than eighty years. The government has not been managing coral fishing in the past, but now the current regulation would limit the boats to fish only 12 nautical miles away from the shore and only to operate 240 days per year. Also, the limit of 120 kilograms per year per ship would help to maintain a sustainable ecosystem.

However, scholars and environmentalists criticized that the development of corals was not easy, and lots of organisms would gather around corals, making it a significant indicator for environment of the area. Also, one should not only consider the commercial value of the corals,

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but should also consider ecological and scenery values. The Environmental Protection Union rebuked that the wrongful decision to license the exploitation of corals would be against the global effort of coral protection.

Nien-Tsu Hu, Director of the Center for Marine Policy Studies of National Sun Yat-sen University, expressed that when Jian-chyuan Su, Minister of COA, announced the “New Agriculture Movement” in June, 2006, he had already indicated that fishing activities which would severely damage to the ecosystem would be completely prohibited in 3 years, which included the exploitation of flying fish eggs, larval fish, and corals.

However, the new “Regulations for Coral Fishing Vessels” by COA licensed 96 new coral exploitation boats, and the regulation only indicated that the number of boats would “gradually decrease over the years”, but did not precisely mention the rate. In addition, the regulation did not limit on the fishing equipments and methods, and did not specify size/height of the corals or total coral quantity to be exploited. This could be a great catastrophe for surrounding corals in the maritime under this type of loose management, said Director Hu.

Keryea Soong, Professor of National Sun Yat-sen University, explained that the fisherman

exploited the deep sea corals to make jewelry or coral carvings. Yet the deep sea corals have a slow growth rate; they only grow less than 1 millimeter in 20 years. The decision of the Fishery Agency seemed to be protecting the fisherman, but in fact it was destroying the future. The damage may never be recovered in our lifetime.

Professor Soong indicated that the fishermen were still using traditional fishing methods; they would drop the net and then drag blindly. On the other hand, in developed countries such as U.S., they would collect the corals by diving or by driving a submarine; they had rules that only allow fishermen to pick up coral if they see it, and they also had limitation to the size they could pick up. Although the Fishery Agency in Taiwan requested the fishing boats to install the VMS to monitor and control their locations, if the system had been turned off, no one could know where the fishing boat had gone.



Taiwan Shines on Global Greens

On May 1st, “The Global Greens 2008” took place in São Paulo, Brazil, and representatives from 87 countries around the globe attended; among them was the

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representative from Taiwan, a full member of Global Greens and one of the founding members of the Asia Pacific Greens Network (APGN). In this “United Nation for Green Organizations” there were common values for environmental protection, human rights, and climate changes; and the Green Party’s core values included biodiversity, peace, non-violence, grass-root democracy, etc successfully helped to establish a successful environmental diplomacy.

On May 12th, Green Party Taiwan (GPT) Secretary-General, Han-Shen Pan, held a press conference to report the meeting results. There were 3 proposals passed during the meeting, including “support for human rights in Tibet”, “nuclear energy is not an option to combat climate change” and “request for immediate release of kidnapped Colombian Green Party spiritual leader Ingrid Betancourt.” Among them, Taiwan initiated the 2 proposals related to Taiwan’s sovereignty: “support for Tibet” and “anti-nuclear.” In addition, the Taiwan youth representatives presented the anti-Suhua Freeway case study, Suhua Cake Shop, in the Global Young Greens (GYG), and was considered the coolest project. They won the support of anti freeway activists from various countries.

During the congress, the representative of Taiwan aboriginals addressed the effects of the

climate change upon the aboriginal society and introduced the ecological wisdom of Taiwan aboriginals. They also proposed to establish the “Global Aboriginal Green Community”.

In 2001, the first Global Greens was held in Canberra, Australia. The Global Greens network was set-up for the organization of regular congress, and the Global Greens Charter has been established as the principle and guideline for political actions of Global Greens. In 2008, the 2nd Global Greens congress extended the subjects to biomass energy, Kyoto Protocol, sustainable city, next step for Global Greens, climate change, as well as the “21 points for 21st century,” to serve as the guideline for future Global Greens activities.

Pan also pointed out that, the visual and audio recordings in this trip would be edited into a documentary film as a database to connect the globe and grass-root empowerment. Taiwan Green Party and Taiwan Friends of Global Greens would hold 60 forums around the country in the future. These forums would base upon the core value of the Green Party Charters from the 2001 Canberra congress, 2008 São Paulo declaration and the 21 points for 21st century to empower the local grass-root.



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Taiwan Maritime Website; the Portal of Marine Life Education

On June 8th, the “World Maritime Day”, National Museum of Marine Biology and Aquarium (NMMBA) launched the “Taiwan Maritime Portal Website”; it would enable people to learn the knowledge of ocean within clicks, as well as how to value and protect the ocean.

The website (<http://top.nmmba.gov.tw>) was launched by NMMBA as an ocean-themed portal to deliver comprehensive maritime information through a variety of interactivities. By subscribing to the ocean channel, the viewers would be able to learn a lot of interesting information and activities related to the ocean. The portal included a great volume of contents, such as research of marine ecology, marine news, marine life, marine preservation, marine culture and music, etc.

On the website, there was the “Marine News Channel,” which would provide national and international news about marine ecological researches, marine preservation, and introduction to people with achievements related to ocean, etc. “Marine Life Channel” would deliver information about the maritime scenic spots in Taiwan. “Marine Preservation Channel”

would teach the viewers how to select seafood that could be beneficial to the health of ocean. “Culture and Music Channel” would broadcast maritime art activities.

Director General of NMMBA, Wei-Hsien Wang, indicated that the Earth had been facing drastic environmental changes; therefore the preservation of marine ecosystem had become a critical issue. It was hoped that through the website, information about the ocean could be delivered to the public, to help them learn and become familiar with the ocean, and then start to help protect the ocean. Taiwan Maritime Portal Website had received over ten thousand subscriptions since it was launched last year. The website was linked to many websites around the world, connecting Taiwan to the world in the field of marine life preservation.



COA Continues to Send Patrolling Boat to Protect Atlantic and Indian Ocean

Fishery Agency of COA (Council of Agriculture, Executive Yuan) announced that, on April 22nd, the fishery training boat Yu-Hsun No. 2 would be assigned to perform high-sea patrolling between Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean, for a period of 183 days. During the

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patrol session, the Coast Guard Administration sent 4 legal officers to standby on-board, in order to help with the mission.

The Fishery Agency further expressed that, in order to take into consideration for the relevant decisions by ICCAT (The International Commission for the Conservation of Atlantic Tunas) and IOTC (Indian Ocean Tuna Commission), for the past few years, Taiwan had been implementing various measures to reinforce far sea fishery management; these measures included: installation of VMS (vessel monitoring system) on far-sea fishing boats, fishing-harvest reporting regulations, designated personnel to inspect at various foreign ports, sending observers to operating fishery boats, and sending patrolling boats to high-sea for on-board inspection. In particular, by sending Yu-Hsun No. 2 to Atlantic Ocean and Indian Ocean to perform patrolling mission, Taiwan's authority would demonstrate their determination to put fishery management into effect.

This was the third year for Taiwan to send Yu-Hsun No. 2 into the two great oceans for patrolling missions. The tasks included: monitoring the operation of Taiwanese far-sea fishing boats, maintaining the order of fishing zones to prevent violation of regulations, performing on-board inspection when necessary,

as well as taking fishery observers to and from assigned fishing boats for observing missions. Monitoring of Taiwanese fishermen would ensure total compliance for the relevant regulations.



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