



## **CCICED Nature-Based Solutions Joint Meeting of Chinese and International Experts**

December 15, 2020

**Moderated by CCICED Secretariat International Support Office**

### **Opening remarks**

**Professor LIU Shijin, CCICED Chinese Chief Advisor**, kicked off the joint experts meeting by providing an overview of recent developments in global politics which provides additional relevance and significance to the CCICED nature-based solutions (NbS) research. Professor LIU indicated that utilizing nature as a solution for climate issues is an issue of conviction (理念) that we need to accept rather than another tool to tackle climate-related problems, and this conviction will also strengthen the concept of achieving an ecological civilization through sustainable development.

**Mr. Scott Vaughan, CCICED International Chief Advisor**, expressed optimism in the remarkable leadership from China on green development. He proceeded to introduce the main topics of discussion for today's meeting, 1) increasing knowledge and awareness for NbS; 2) setting parameters (i.e. [Urban Nature Atlas](#)) to identify model case studies; 3) accounting practices to measure performance; and finally 4) policies lessons and changes required to better support NbS in China. Mr. Vaughan notes the recent inclusion of marine ecology under China's ecological red-line protection as an example to indicate China's prevalent practice of employing nature to defuse climate-change impacts.

### **Session 1: Increasing Knowledge/Awareness of NBS**

**Mr. Thomas Lovejoy, Senior Fellow, UN Foundation**, through a broader biological perspective, pointed out that the current environmental issues are essentially biological, and it is only logical to tackle these biological issues with solutions based in nature. Dr. Lovejoy explained that the earth's planetary history indicated that the natural ecosystem will inevitably fall apart and reassemble again, as it has many times in the past. However, if the Paris Agreement of 1.5 °C target can be reached through NbS restoration measures, then there is still hope for a positive future for humankind and other species on earth.

**Professor WANG Yi, Vice President of Institutes of Science and Development, Chinese Academy of Sciences**, provided an overview of the development timeline of the NbS concept and the process of standardizing the terminology (nature-based solutions vs nature-climate solutions). To reach carbon neutrality, Professor WANG notes that China's current carbon sink capacity of 1 billion tons is insufficient and shared several studies with comprehensive analysis of [NbS/NcS contributions to reach a 1.5-degree pathway](#). However, without standardized quantitative targets, current assessment indicators remain outmoded (i.e. measuring forest coverage). Other challenges of NbS in China include scattered policies, lack of diversified funding and stakeholders, and difficulty in identifying a Monitoring, Reporting and Verification (MRV) system. Professor WANG presented the following 5 recommendations: 1) mainstream NbS in addressing climate change; 2) strengthen supportive governance system; 3) mobilize funds; 4) strengthen synergy between NbS, Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), COP15 and COP26; 5) encourage China to adopt a leadership role in mainstreaming NbS.

**Dr. Harvey Locke, Chair, Beyond the Aichi Targets Task Force, IUCN World Commission on Protected Areas**, highlighted several studies pointing to the [biodiversity loss from land-use changes](#), [timeframe required for restoration](#), and the necessity of [prioritizing intact nature for protection](#). Dr. Locke emphasized the importance of protecting and increasing the area of ecologically valuable land with high capacity for carbon storage to foster synergy between the upcoming Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15) and Climate Change Conference (COP26). Dr. Locke noted very long time periods for most ecosystem restoration, including from a carbon sequestration lens. Dr. Locke proceeded to offer 3 principles of NbS for consideration: 1) NbS should not harm intact nature; 2) NbS should first prioritize protecting intact nature to meet climate goals; 3) NbS restoration measures should focus on native species. Dr. Locke concluded that the biodiversity co-benefits of NbS will increase the effectiveness of carbon storage and further support the realization of ecological civilization.

**Mr. GAO Xiang, Division Director, Division of International Policy Research, National Center for Climate Change Strategy and International Cooperation**, through a climate perspective, identified a few synergistic areas between China's climate change measures and NbS. Through field work and discussion with peers, Mr. GAO has observed that China has been conducting ecological adaptation and mitigation measures for many years, only without the label of NbS. Examples include mine reclamation, sustainable agriculture practices, eco-friendly construction materials, wastewater treatment via constructed wetlands, and Land use, land-use change, and forestry (LULUCF) measures. Mr. GAO further notes that mainstreaming NbS at the local level may prove to be more effective

than through the central government.

### **Session 2: NBS Case Studies**

**Mr. ZOU Changxin, Research Fellow/Division Director, Research Center for Ecological Protection and Restoration, Nanjing Institute of Environmental Sciences**, through ecological protection and restoration perspective, suggests that incorporating the concept of NbS into existing adaptation and mitigation measures can improve results (i.e. increase carbon sequestration), strengthen protection and evaluation systems, and present benefits crosscutting into multiple sectors.

### **Session 3: Accounting NBS Cost/Benefits**

**Mr. Robert Smith, Principal, Midsummer Analytics**, noted the importance of assessing NbS from a wider wealth perspective, including natural capital. Mr. Smith stressed that climate is the earth's greatest asset, and his research in support of the NbS report will focus on defining and valuing this natural asset, investment strategies and timeframe, as well as growth potential. The methodology employed is based on the work of natural-capital accounting, specifically ecosystem accounting. The wealth lens enables a perspective of NbS beyond cost-benefit assessment to a comprehensive wealth method that includes natural capital measurement within a longer as well as forward time horizon.

### **Inputs and Discussion**

**Dimitri De Boer, Chief China Representative, ClientEarth**, concurs with Mr. ZOU's point on the importance of prioritizing actions to avoid and prevent damage to nature. He further notes that prioritizing intact nature has been underappreciated in its value to the environment, as well as in its economic benefits.

**Mr. ZHANG Xiaoquan, Chief Scientific Officer, The Nature Conservancy**, by employing afforestation as an example, suggested that clearer criteria for defining NbS activities need to be established. Mr. ZHANG reaffirms the notion mentioned by others in that there needs to be standardized understanding of the concept of NbS.

**Ms. Ania Grobicki, Deputy Director of External Affairs, Green Climate Fund**, shared several case studies from the Green Climate Fund (i.e. [reducing flood impacts in Nepal](#), [empowering communities for climate resilience in Namibia](#)) and lessons from outcomes. Ms. Grobicki also noted that GCF is moving from individual country projects approach to region based large-scale programs, specifically of biome communities.

**Ms. WANG Binbin, Coordinator, Institute of Climate Change and Sustainable**

**Development, Tsinghua University**, introduced the Nature-based Solution Cooperation Platform, found in Tsinghua University, with expert participation from both climate and biodiversity sectors. Ms. WANG remarked that the concept of NbS is highly synergistic with the SDGs and in achieving ecological civilization, and therefore the common interest in NbS from China and abroad can be employed to foster dialogue in achieving green development goals.

**Mr. Guido Schmidt-Traub, Executive Director, UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network**, highlighted the importance of maps and recommends pairing national climate strategies with [spatial representation of conservation and restoration areas](#), as well as place-based policies. With resources readily available, Mr. Guido notes that China is well-positioned to take the lead in complimenting national climate strategies with spatial mapping.

**Mr. Peter White, Ambassador for Biodiversity and CBD COP15, WBCSD**, underscored the interest from the private sector of investment in NbS and shared [recent WBCSD report](#) with the objective of providing private enterprises with the knowledge and tools to navigate the nature and climate agenda, and to accelerate investments.

**Ms. JIN Tong, Science Director, The Nature Conservancy**, noted that natural capital accounting is important in valuing natural assets, however, progress is still required to present these findings in easily understandable layman language for wider public acceptance and garner more private investment into NbS.