

SPS-LED EVENT AT NEW YORK WATER WEEK

MANAGING RIVER BASINS AS A SYSTEM

Open meeting of the Special Policy Study on *River Basins* of the China Council

Official names:

Special Policy Study on High-Quality Development of River Basins and Adaptation to Climate Change

China Council for International Collaboration on Environment and Development <https://cciced.eco/>

Thematic focus

Climate change complicates and exacerbates the already large challenges of managing river basins. The complications include not only adaptation (of cities, ports, nature conservation and security systems) but also the decarbonization and deep change of economic sectors – from energy to agriculture. Restructuring and engineering on a massive scale during the past two centuries have created significant path dependencies for future management of basins.

There is a growing insight among river managers and knowledge organizations that river management extends, or should extend, beyond water supply and sanitation, transport and flood protection. Effective and future-oriented management needs to include the whole basin and their governance, from source to sea but also including activities on land. This is exiting and difficult at the same time, especially in terms of governance. Nobody has demonstrated the perfect approach yet. But here is a great opportunity to learn from the many ongoing initiatives worldwide.

The China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED) was established in 1992 with the approval of the Chinese government. Over the past 30 years, consisting of leading international and Chinese experts and senior officials, and chaired by one of the leaders of China's State Council, CCICED serves as a high-level advisory body and has played an active role in advising Chinese senior leaders on policies related to environment and development and in sharing China's vision and practice on ecological civilization with the rest of the world. CCICED has set up five-year research framework during Phase VII (2022-2026) to learn from promising cases worldwide, and extract policy recommendations and peer insights and encouragement.

This River Basin Special Policy Study is one of CCICED's current ongoing SPS programs. It is co-led by Chinese and international knowledge organizations and involves a good network of multilateral development organizations and others. Its program is structured along five guiding principles: (i) make good on your responsibility stretching from the headwaters to the coastal seas; (ii) adopt a 100-year perspective and plan your steps; (iii) engage everybody who can contribute and develop a shared vision; (iv) adapt to climate change and other principal river stressors in every aspect of the management of river areas; and (v) continue to strengthen and innovate.

Relation with the themes of the Interactive Dialogues of the UN Water Conference

Work of the Special Policy Study is closely related to no less than three of the themes of the UNWC Interactive Dialogues:

- Water for Development (including urban development)
- Water for Climate, Resilience, Environment
- Water for Cooperation

In terms of the themes of the New York Water Week, the work of the SPS is most closely related to *Resilient Cities*.

Cross-sectoral partnerships

The very nature of the three organizations leading the Special Policy Study demonstrates its broad, cross-sectoral scope: The China Academy of Urban Planning and Design; The Nature Conservancy; and a Dutch team comprised of Deltares, PBL Netherlands Environment Assessment Agency, with close connection to the Ministry of Water and Infrastructure. Speakers and panelists at the event represent a good mix of senior officials and experts, senior basin managers and development leaders, from China and elsewhere.

Potential main messages from the event

1. In order to effectively reach the goals of water security and maintain them in the coming decades, river basins should be managed as a system. Notions such as Ecological Civilization can help to convey the need for a long time horizon, various eco-systems and levels of governance institutions.
2. The Special Policy Study team will be collaborating with knowledge partners worldwide in a structured program of peer exchange on cases, aimed at producing top-level policy advice. This program is meant to contribute to knowledge exchange worldwide.

Programme

Date: 20 March, 10:30-12:30 EST

Venue: Water House (666 Third Avenue, 21st floor)

Room open: 10:00 AM

In-person event, not on-line, but recorded.

Simultaneous translation between English and Chinese will be provided.

Approximate number of participants: 60.

Sign-up is required: <https://cciced.eco/events/managing-river-basins-as-a-system/>

Master of Ceremony: **Robert TANSEY** (Senior Policy Advisor, China & Global Policy Lead, Degraded Lands and Restoration, TNC, he/him)

Overview Remarks [30 min total]

Hans Mommaas (Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment, Chair; Special Advisor of CCICED; former Director-General of PBL, he/him)

Li Yuanyuan (Vice President, General Institute of Water Resources and Hydropower Planning and Design (GIWP), China; President, International Water Resources Association (IWRA), he/him)

Li Xiaojiang (President Emeritus, CAUPD, Special Advisor of CCICED and co-leader of Special Policy Study, PR China, he/him). Recorded address. Mr. Li Xiaojiang provides a 10 minute overview of SPS River Basins.

Addresses highlighting challenges, opportunities and cases of governing river basins as a system

[30 min total]

Nicole SILK (Global Director for Freshwater Outcomes, TNC, she/her)

Gerry GALLOWAY (emeritus Professor, University of Maryland, and former Commander, Mississippi Basin, US Corps of Engineers, he/him)

LV Xiaobei (Vice Director, Shenzhen Institute of CAUPD, she/her) Recorded address

Brief discussion

[35 min total]

Jodie Bignall (CEO, International River Foundation, she/her)

HUANG Yan (Deputy Chief engineer, Changjiang Water Resources Commission, she/her), recorded address [14 min]

Hans MOMMAAS (Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment, Chair; Special Advisor of CCICED; former Director-General of PBL, he/him)

Brief discussion

Panel observations and final discussion [20 min total]

- Representative of **World Bank** (Marcus Wishart, Lead Water Resources Specialist, he/him) addressing gender and equity among other aspects [TBC]
- **Lifeng Li** (Director, Land and Water Division (NSL), FAO, he/him) [TBC]

Final discussion

Summing up [5 min]

- representative of the Ministry of Ecology and Environment PR China [TBC]