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Sustainability within the China-Africa relationship: governance, investment, and natural capital

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**Welcome remarks:**

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**Key speakers:**

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Rule Jimmy Opelo  
Deputy Permanent Secretary (DPS)  
Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism of Botswana

Pang Xun  
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Qi Ye  
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**Xue Lan:**

Welcome to this – what do we call this, symposium? Workshop? – This dialogue on Sustainability within the China-Africa Relationship: Governance, Investment, and Natural Capital. Welcome to the School of Public Policy and Management. And we are very grateful to our partners in co-hosting this event. I'm also particularly happy that many of our IMPA students are also here – I think they are starting their summer program.

I think the issues of China and Africa in terms of development, investment and natural capital are really crucial for the future of our sustainable development. As we know the SDGs – the sustainable development goals – were adopted by the international world last year. But in terms of implementation, I think there are huge challenges. I think that particularly for many developing countries, such as China and Africa, how do we on the one hand make the development possible and at the same maintain the sustainable path. I think that is the challenge we all have to struggle against.

I think in China's development goals – now for 30-plus years – we have seen that China achieved economic development but at the same time suffer huge cost in environment. I think that there are a lot of things that can be learned from China's experience. We do hope that today's dialogue and discussion will give insights that will be helpful not only just for the audiences here but also for people in other part of the world. So I do hope we have a good way to record our discussion.

Without further ado, let me introduce our keynote speaker, Minister Anyaa Vohiri, who is the Executive Director and Chief Executive Officer of the Environmental Protection Agency of Liberia since September 2010. Anyaa Vohiri has been a leader in conservation work in Liberia for many years. She played a key role in drafting various environmental protection legislation in Liberia including: the *Environment Protection Agency Act*, which created the EPA, and the *Environment Protection and Management Law* of the Republic of Liberia- both enacted in 2002. Her previous posts include country office manager of Fauna & Flora International (FFI) in Monrovia from 2002–2008, and UNDP Environment Project LIR program officer from 1999–2002, where she worked to support the National Environment Commission of Liberia. Hon. Vohiri received a Master of Arts in Asian Studies from the

University of Hawaii-Manoa in 1972 and has studied international relations and Chinese at the Monterey Institute of International Studies. She has a Juris Doctorate in Environmental Law from William S. Richardson School of Law. She obtained a Bachelor of Arts in political science from Boston University in 1967. Now without further ado, let's welcome Honorable Anyaa Vohiri.

**Anyaa Vohiri:**

Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, nimen dou haoma? Nimen hao buhao? Wo ye shuo zhongwen. [Translation from Mandarin: How is everyone doing? I speak Chinese too.]  
[Laughter]

I am very happy to be here, especially to see young people who are interested in what it is we are trying to do about the future. Seeing my fellow Africans, I appreciate your appearances. Africa's strong economic performance over the past two decades has translated into ever-increasing energy demands across the continent. At the same time, water, wind, sun and bio-fuels stocks are abundant on the continent and so far largely untapped. For example, approximately, less than 7 percent of Africa's enormous hydro potential has been harnessed. Countries need efficient and cost-effective ways by which to harness these resources, as they are best positioned to fulfill the needs of Africa's large rural populations which can only be reached in medium term by the combination of on-grid, mini-grid and off-grid technologies.

Moreover, these renewables can be employed on a necessary scale to avoid reliance on small-scale national power systems, which rely heavily on oil-based generation. If industrial economic development continues to sustain under-enhanced growth, Africa's emission may increase significantly unless the continent can leap forward to clean industrial development.

As a less advanced industrial region, Africa will not have to pay the high adjustment cost that development economies must pay to transition to a low-carbon path. Concerted actions are needed to assist the continent in chalking out a sustainable path to low-carbon development by giving more of its people access to energy. Africa has the opportunity to power its development with clean energy. Based on the limited initiatives that have been

undertaken today, renewable energy technologies – RET – could contribute significantly to the development on the key sectors of the African countries. Renewable energy technologies are both attractive, environmentally sound, and provide more technological options for Africa's electricity industry. RETs could offset a significant proportion of foreign exchange that is used for inputting oil for electricity generation in most of our countries.

In addition, renewables are modular and are well suited for meeting decentralized, rural energy demand. The modular nature, for example, can be developed in an incremental fashion in most of the renewable energy technology. And the low investment levels make them particularly suitable for capital-constraint African countries. Most renewable energy technology utilizes locally available resources and expertise, and would therefore provide employment opportunities for locals. However, the success of the renewable energy technologies in the region has been limited by a combination of factors, which includes poor institutional framework and infrastructure, inadequate renewable energy technologies, planning policies, lack of coordination and linkage in the renewable energy area, pricing distortions which has placed renewable energy at an disadvantage, high initial capital cost, weak dissemination strategies, lack of skilled manpower, poor baseline information, and weak maintenance service and infrastructure. In all of these areas, we need support.

Africa is endowed with sustainable renewable energy resources. The region has 1.1 petawatts of hydropower capacity, nine thousand megawatts of geo-thermal potential, and abundant biomass, solar, and significant wind potential. The renewable energy resource potential in Africa has not been fully exploited, mainly due to the limited policy interest and investment levels. In addition, technical financial barriers have contributed to the low levels of uptake of RETs in regions.

There are, however, prospects for the wide scale development and dissemination of the renewable energy technology in the region. There is growing consensus among policymakers that efforts to disseminate renewable energy technology in Africa have fallen short of expectation. While it is recognized that RETs cannot solve all of Africa's energy problems, renewable technology are still seen as having a significant unexploited potential to enable African countries to meet their energy requirements.

Renewable energy is already the dominant source of energy for the household subsector. Biomass, for example, if properly harnessed, could meet a significant proportion of energy demand from the industrial, agricultural, transport and commercial subsectors. Africa owns plenty potentially renewable energy resources, such as hydropower, geothermal, biomass, solar and wind energy. And these present huge investment opportunities for China. While African economy largely depends on agriculture and mining, it is imperative that the continent would scale up its investment in climate-resilient infrastructure in the two sectors to enable sustainable and equitable growth. South-South collaboration is going to be part of the solution – has to be part of the solution.

Collaboration can start with environment and energy since China has done a lot in terms of renewable energy and moving from subsistence agriculture to commercial agriculture. We want to see how we would work very closely with China to ensure they are able to support us in creating environment safeguards and standards and to ensure whatever we do, it's done with environmental lenses, bearing in mind environmental consequences. My country, Liberia, joins the rest of the Africa to advocate balancing the use of low-carbon intensive technologies to keep energy secure and affordable, especially to the rural areas.

Although the cost of installing clean energy generation has decreased sharply as we learned in China in the past 10 years, clean energy has not yet reached great priority. As long as the primary energy mix is based toward low-cost fuel, balancing the technology mix will require leadership and advocacy. And I want to believe that's why the young people are here. I want to thank you for this opportunity. I am here share whatever I can and to hear from you what is it that China and Africa can do together for the future of our world? Thank you. (Applause)

**Xue Lan:**

Thank you. Now let's invite Professor Zheng Zhenqing to moderate the dialogue and the panelists. Today we invited Minister Anyaa, Mr. Rule Jimmy Opelo, Mr. Peter Seligmann, Professor Qi Ye and Professor Pang Xun.

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

We are so lucky to invite such distinguished guests to attend our forum this afternoon, who are real experts in this topic. The topic is Sustainability Within the China-Africa Relationship. Let's give our applause to our experts. [Applause.]

And we are so lucky to have you all to attend this afternoon's discussion. Besides, friends, media and other professions are all welcomed. I am Zheng Zhenqing, Professor of Tsinghua University and director of the IMPA master program. I am so happy and lucky to be a part of this afternoon's discussion.

I would like to give introduction to our panelist speakers. The first is Honorable Anyaa Vohiri. Now we know you well, your participation in political legislation, especially in your role of promoting environmental protection. We learned some more from your speech just now.

The second is Mr. Rule Jimmy Opelo. He is currently working as Deputy Permanent Secretary (DPS) in the Ministry of Environment, Wildlife and Tourism of Botswana. Jimmy is also responsible for environmental action. Mr. Opelo is a former Director of the Department of Waste Management and Pollution Control. Welcome. Welcome, Jimmy.

Chairman Peter Seligman. Peter is the co-founder, CEO and co-founder, of Conservation International, which is a famous global nonprofit organization. He works in partnership with governments, communities, and businesses to find solutions to ensure the sustainability of our natural resources. You are so famous in China.

We also invited our professors from Tsinghua. First we have Professor Qi Ye, who is a leading expert on China's environmental policy, a senior fellow and director of the Brookings-Tsinghua Center for Public Policy (BTC) in Beijing. His research focuses on China's policies on climate change, environment, energy, natural resources, and urbanization.

Last but not least, Pang Xun is a Tsinghua professor in the Department of International Relations, Tsinghua University, Beijing, China. Her research and teaching interests are

centered around political methodology, Bayesian statistics, Markov Chain Monte Carlo simulation, international and comparative political economy. Welcome, Professor Pang.

Before our experts' speech, to our audiences, if you have any questions and ideas, please write them down and our staff members will collect your question notes. We will pick questions to ask our experts.

Now, as the moderator, I am honored to ask some questions to our experts and invite our experts to give speeches. My first question is to Minister Vohiri.

So, Minister, you witnessed the achievements of China and Africa – the cultures met in economic cooperation – and you know well the African people's need. So how do you understand the keyword 'sustainability' in the context of China-Africa relationship? And what can we do to promote sustainability, from your perspective?

**Anyaa Vohiri:**

Taduiwo? [Translated from Mandarin: Is he addressing me?]

I am not sure how sustainability in terms of China-Africa relationship is any different from sustainability overall with the environmental sector and how we see the rest of the world. Right now, we are looking at pursuing eco-civilization within the context of all issues, for the future. So we want to achieve sustainability by collaborating, especially looking at what we are trying to put forward here – the South-South Cooperation – that we share with each other what we have, what we learnt. In a few days in China, I've recognized how much have been done here, how much can be shared with us, but also recognizing that we have a lot to share with China. Sustainability has to be both ways; this is why I think it is an absolute, pursuing what we all believe in as the future of our globe.

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

Thank you, Minister Vohiri. Very short and very impressive answer, thank you for your speech. My second question is for Mr. Jimmy. As an experienced and excellent officer, you must have quite a few cases to share with us. Could you give us some case? What is your most difficult job in dealing with environmental protection?

**Rule Jimmy Opelo:**

Thank you, Mr. Moderator. I think before I get to answering your question, let me just explain something here that actually brings us here to China. Why China? Why not other places?

In order to have a friend, the first thing to observe is that you must have commonalities. You cannot be a friend with someone [with whom] you don't share, don't look at things in the same way. So this sustainability between Africa and China, we are looking at it from the point of view where we have common aspirations, the desire to develop our economies and our people, and their livelihoods, as well as issues of like-mindedness. We also appreciate and understand very well the concept of common but differentiated responsibility and ability that is stated out by the UNFCCC (United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change).

To answer the question, one of the most difficult experiences when dealing with environmental issues is firstly the issue of awareness. The second is how to bring people around. It is not an easy task, and you can witness this yourselves, if you look at how long it has taken for the Paris Agreement to go through in the negotiations on climate change. It is not the question of people not understanding, it is a question of people in the global context of asking themselves what are they going into as they leave their comfort zones.

But, unfortunately or fortunately, it tests out to be the best way to go about [the reduction of climate change]. Because we see it, we feel it. The environment or the ecological system can no longer take what we throw at it, looking at the rate of the consumption. Throughout the world, our lifestyle does not take into consideration of the limits of our ecosystem.

So the difficulty is how to bring everybody else on board. And the best way to go about it in our thinking is, first of all, look for people whom you share common understanding and common aspirations towards that particular thing you want to achieve. Eco Forum Global [in China] has almost the same aspirations that we strive for within the Gaborone



Declaration for Sustainability in Africa to build economy in recognition of the environment and the livelihood of its people.

I think for now I will say that [those] are the two most difficult things: the difficulty to get people along and mindset. Thank you so much.

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

So would you say you need more support from civil society and the private sector to promote the work of environmental protection?

**Rule Jimmy Opelo:**

The short answer is that you need partners. You need collaborators. You need people who have the same understanding and the same goal to achieve. And like you just mentioned, yes, you need people who will help you in the process.

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

Thank you. And Peter, as the Chairman and CEO, I know you have been working with governments, communities and businesses. According to your understanding, on what conditions can officials in developing countries understand or recognize the issue of working towards sustainable development and use of natural resources?

**Peter Seligmann:**

Understanding. I think every person here understands sustainability. I think that it's in your self-interest. It's, how do you survive and how do your children survive. We don't necessarily select the right way to achieve that and we often make mistakes in how we live, but our aspiration to have our families be healthy and our communities to thrive and our nations to be strong is really a common interest.

And so the challenge is to be able to find the right path, to select the right way and to have the right view of where to you want to arrive and the way you want to live. The challenge is really embracing right core values.

What I find all over the world is that families, mothers, fathers, uncles, business leaders and heads of state understand this is actually in their enlightened self-interest. The path is not clear. The reason that China is embracing vigorously the concept of eco-civilization is because when you cannot breathe the air, cannot drink the water safely and cannot eat the food safely, it's frightening and it's dangerous. It is not in your self-interest to live that way.

The same thing is true in every country, with every community. The reason that my friends from Botswana and Liberia and from rest of the world are embracing and engaging in the search sustainability (28:33) is because they want their families and their communities to be healthier in the future than they are today. It's really not complex.

The complexity is changing our behavior. The complexity is figuring out the right way to balance our needs. It's understanding that there are unintended consequences of some of our decisions: that if we cut down our forests, we lose our source of fresh waters. If we destroy our coral reefs, we could lose our source of fish protein. If we put fossil fuels in the air, we change the climate.

If we could become aware of the unintended consequences of the things that we do, and then figure out the next path. The challenge is that path. And that's really what I have spent my entire life working on and I think that's why all these young people are here today, because that's what they are searching for – what is the contribution that we can make as an individual to a healthy, harmonious, stable future for our families and nations?

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

Thank you very much for your answer. Honestly, it's quite hard for an NGO, for the CI, to find support from governments and the common people. Thank you. I would like to hear more about your understanding later.

Now Professor Qi Ye. As a famous and a real expert in China's environmental policies, you have conducted intensive research on China's sustainable development. Within the UN, there have been two popular and famous keywords in sustainable development – MDGs (Millennium Development Goals) and SDGs (Sustainable Development Goals). Could you tell us about the meaning of these concepts, and what the Chinese government has done to promote these goals?

**Qi Ye:**

First of all, allow me to welcome my dean, Professor Xue Lan, and our guests to our event at School of Public Policy and Management at Tsinghua University. Also, I would like to like to take this opportunity to thank GreenPoint for initiating this event – this is a very meaningful conversation. The subject today is really important, so thank you for being here.

China, Africa, our historical relationship. Seeing a lot of young faces among the audiences today, I would like to bring in a little bit of historical background to highlight the role of this relationship between China, US and other countries in developing the idea of sustainability or sustainable development. The concept has been around for about three decades now. We have all seen it in our textbook, in our classrooms, talking about the formation into an international text, documented in 1987 when the World Commission on Environment and Development published this report titled *Our Common Future*.

What we often do not know very well is that this whole idea and the first proposal was formed by the World Commission led by Mrs. Gro Brundtland, the former Prime Minister of Norway. It was in 1982, in Nairobi, when the proposal was made. The next year, Ms. Brundtland became the first chair for the Commission. They started to work in 1986. Among the 22 members, five of them were from Africa, including the Vice Chairman, Mansour Khalid, who was then the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Sudan. So, really, the idea has the historical background and roots in Africa with huge contribution from our colleagues in Africa. Of course, there was Chinese participation. My professor – Professor Ma Shijun – was among the 22 members of that commission. That is also why I became a student studying this area.

I just want to point out, back then, China and Africa faced very similar issues. These issues are really not of sustainability per se, back then, three decades [ago], but of the development part – how you can grow your economy to feed the population.

Think about it, half or even more than half of the population here is facing this poverty alleviation issue. Over three decades, I've seen in China more than 7 hundred million of the

population was lifted out of poverty. And last year, when talking about the Sustainable Development Goals at the United Nations, Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has said China helped to fulfill three quarters of the target for the poverty alleviation. Of course you know the Poverty Alleviation Program is a huge program here in China, but that alone does not solve the problem. I think the key was really the economic growth- economic growth in the last three decades was really the key factor that helped the population [in] getting out of poverty.

Another concept mentioned here is natural capital. We have worked tirelessly in promoting and preserving our natural capital. China and Africa have this huge involvement in natural capital. I want to point out one thing. We know the concept itself was put forward by a group of ecologists in Stanford, including E. F. Schumacher and Herman Edward Daly. But it is very important for us to distinguish between *nature* and *capital*. Putting them together really requires new meaning of [the terms].

One of the lessons we learned over the course of Chinese economic development over the last three decades was that we treated nature as capital. We didn't really do a lot of thinking about how to properly treat natural capital. We just treated nature as capital, and we basically turn nature into wealth. We turned nature into a product, we consume the product, we export. We learnt a huge lesson from that as my dean Xue Lan pointed out. The biggest lesson we have learned in this development was that there was not adequate investment in nature. Rather, we just exploited and extracted resources from nature. That's why we face all these challenges Peter just pointed out: clean water, fresh air, and safe food. All of these problems.

The investment that Minister Anyaa Vohiri talked about was so important, and we learned that big lesson. Just about a decade ago, China began to increase investment in environmental protection and clean energy. Ever since 2009, China has been leading the world in the area of renewable energy. Currently, China has spent about 9 hundred million US dollars in renewable energy. In terms of green power, solar power and employment of all these solar and wind technologies, 30 years ago, the share of renewable energy in the overall energy industry in China was 3%. Now the share [totals] up to 12%. It is not just a

[four-fold] increase, because we know in the last three decades, the total energy consumption has increased a couple of times already. So there is a huge increase in this area.

This is also one area I see tremendous potential for profit to be made in China and Africa. We now know that the capital involvement in clean energy in Africa is so huge. I also want to echo the Minister's point on South-South Cooperation. Last September, President Xi Jinping announced that we are not just contributing to the South-South fun for climate change issues but making a huge increase. He committed 3.1 billion US dollars – which is even more than the United States under Kyoto, under Copenhagen and [under the] Paris Agreement – for South-South Cooperation. I think I really see great potential for climate change, for the Millennium Development Goals and for the Sustainable Development Goals. Thank you.

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

Thank you, Professor Qi. So most countries, including China, need NGOs and the common people to join in a joint endeavor to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals.

**Qi Ye:**

Definitely. On the Millennium Development Goals and Sustainable Development Goals for 2030, there are huge challenges. I personally would be really happy if we could reach half of them. It would be really exciting. It will make huge difference for human beings. And we understand this is really a common set of goals, not just the challenges facing the developing countries but also facing the developed countries. And therefore, the collaboration and cooperation between the developing countries and developed countries are very key to the achievement of these goals.

Also, [we should move] towards the cooperation amongst different sectors of the society, the government, business and the civil society working together. This is really the challenge we face here. We understand the traditional way of governing does not really work. We

need to invent or create a mechanism, the ways of governance that really help us to achieve these goals.

One interesting aspect of the climate change is that it is the ultimate test for the entire human beings to see whether or not we can actually work together. It is not collaboration within a family or a smaller community. It is for [all of] humanity. Same thing for all the seventeen goals under the Sustainable Development Goals. It was very exciting last September when we see the heads of state gathered in New York City, in the headquarters of UN to pledge their support to this goal. It is very exciting to see this.

Three months later, we once again saw this in Paris. It is not only committing individual leadership into this but also a noble call for corporation among different sectors, and also for us to be thinking about what would be a better way of governing to achieve this common good. We are talking about the global good. This is really the true test if we can truly work together.

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

Thank you, Professor Qi, it's an impressively hard job. Thank you. Ok, let's enter another issue, the issue about China's foreign aid, China's foreign affairs, how China deals with foreign affairs. So we invite Professor Pang Xun to share with us your ideas and your findings from your recent research – please.

**Pang Xun:**

So, first I'd like to share with you why I am interested in foreign development aid. I used to be a student and I believed in the theory of investment gap, and I [thought] that why the less developed countries are not so developed is because they do not have sustainable investment. I think largely after doing this research here on international development aid, I [went] from [passionate] to pessimistic because of so many serious issues with foreign development aid, especially official development aid, [which] we call ODA.

As we just briefly discussed before this panel, I invested a lot of effort to study the effectiveness of grand development aid. We heard a lot of criticism from both the donor

side and the recipient side. On the recipient side, aid is often criticized for not promoting growth, creating corruption, generating aid dependent economies and crowding out local industries. Also, damaging the sustainability of the environment in developing countries, and even harming democracy of international or global governance, as mentioned by other panelists.

And then just to share with you one example: a lot of international relations scholars have long been concerned about this issue that ODA may be used as bribery for the donor countries to buy votes from the recipient countries at multilateral organizations. There is a huge trunk of literature on vote buying at international decision-making processes, as in votes at the UN General Assembly, UN Security Council, IMF, World Bank and other specialized IHOs such as IWC. So it's not a secret, I guess.

Many of you already know that the United States has its official policy of aid as [a] tool for U.S. foreign policy, and many other countries also have this foreign policy tool [of] using aid. For example, the United States, the GreenBooks published by USAID. You can see that that there are very well stated strategic and political goals of aid. And also it has been official U.S. policy to link aid to designated important votes at the United Nations since the mid 1980s, because U.S. public law 98-151 was passed in 1983, which mandates an annual report to the Congress assessing vote coincidence of the members at the United Nations, at the General Assembly and the Security Council, with the United States.

One of my research [topics] considers this question. If it's unrealistic for us to prevent ODA from being used as a policy tool, to bribe the recipient countries to vote with the donor countries, then what do we do? [It] considers the possibility that if there are more donors, or if there are more alternatives of aid sources, then whether those donors, competition among those donors, can give recipient countries more bargaining power, more autonomy.

So we did this research, we focused on the competition between China and the United States. Why [did] we do that? Because the United States is the biggest traditional donor, so-called. China is the biggest emerging donor. And the two countries – we don't need to hide it – the two countries are competing with each other in the international arena. So we

focused on competition between China and the United States, and we investigated whether Chinese aid actually decreases the possibility or effectiveness of the United States government [using] its aid to buy votes at the UN GA.

My team and I built this strategic interaction model, and we translated our hypothesis into a so-called statistical backwards induction estimator. We collected data from 70 countries – developing countries – from the years of 2001 to 2012, including 46 African countries. We did this very technical analysis, and I just want to briefly summarize our findings to you.

So the first major finding is that Chinese aid actually changed the foreign policy preferences of those recipient countries in the opposite direction of those of the United States, and it made those countries more likely to vote against the position of United States. So that's the first one.

The second major finding is that Chinese aid as an important alternative actually reduced the sensitivity and vulnerability of the recipient countries to the threat of U.S. aid [being used] as punishment for noncompliance.

The third major finding is that the American threat of cutting aid is less credible with the presence of Chinese aid as a competitive alternative, and it makes those countries not so responsive to U.S. reward or punishment. I think one of the most important implications from our research is that competition among donor countries can give more bargaining power to recipient countries in aid relations.

Our other panelists already mentioned South-South Cooperation, and [other] cooperation. And here, I actually want to more emphasize *competition*, among those powerful countries or those countries [that] are in the advantageous side of this asymmetric relationship of aid. So I think more alternatives of aid sources can actually not only imply recipient countries can have more autonomy to choose their own development models, but also for these recipient countries' foreign policy or political autonomy in international affairs. It's very good for those countries to have their own independent positions in foreign affairs and express their genuine policy preferences in the international democratic decision process.



This also echoes the points made by other panelists that international or global governance is very important for sustainability of development and developing countries, and [keeping] a very good environment of global governance not only relies on cooperation and coordination among countries but [also] on competition among the big countries. I think I want to stop here.

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

Thank you so much for your interesting story. Actually, I understand now: actually it's about political economy, or international political economy. It's very helpful for us to understand our topic, because there are two keywords in our topic: governance and investment.

**Pang Xun:**

Thank you. I want to add that I like international economy. I don't want – I don't like international *political* economy, I hate politics. But I do politics. [Laughter.] Politics is dirty. But I mean, the world is dirty. We have to face the dirty things, so this is why I'm doing politics. This, this does not mean I'm dirty. [Laughter.]

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

Professor Pang is an excellent professor at Tsinghua University. Thank you so much. And I have the last question for all of our experts, okay? Okay, so my last question, professors and experts and chairman and ministers. My last question: Can you tell us, the common people, what can we do to help promote sustainability right now?

**Rule Jimmy Opelo:**

I think right now we all understand where we stand. First of all, we have said that we have a common platform, a common understanding and common aspirations. How do we move forward together? We need to establish the potential or the good grounds from which we can all move towards meeting each other as Africa and also as China, so that we reach out towards the sustainability that we are talking about.

Just to give an example of what I am looking into is this: there are certain things that Africa lacks which China has, and there are certain things that Africa can bring forward that China could help enhance. The Honorable Minister [Vohiri] said here that Africa's challenges are issues of technology, issues of expertise, and even issues of capacity in terms of sometimes funding aspects, in terms of investment. It's a question of looking at how best we can work this thing out.

You know, one of the challenges in Africa, which is sometimes becoming a little controversial to talk [about], is the issue of poverty. Once Africa understands and respects the obligations of looking after the environment, one other challenge we've yet to mention here is the challenge that Africa faces with, "If I do concentrate on the call now, because it is a call, where is the next meal going to come from? Where do my priorities lie?"

And the debate for us has been, should Africa then say, [...] when you get to a certain level, then you can start talking to the developed world. And this is not what we are saying. What we are saying is that because the environment is common and we see it everywhere we go, we can bring forward that what we have. And we want those who have other things to bring forward theirs as well, so that we move together in terms of development, in terms of technology.

We have mentioned already the abundance of mineral resources that we have but for the lack of the other resources that can bring them to fruition. So we believe it is a question of each one of us coming forward with what he has, to relate with each other and move in this respect. Thank you.

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

Thank you, Jimmy, thank you for your words. Yes, and Pang Xun, please?

**Pang Xun:**

From the perspective of international development aid, I think what we should do as an ordinary citizen is hold our governments accountable, because sometimes – this is a very common phenomenon, not only in China, in the United States and other countries,

especially in European countries – citizens just do not hear about how aid is spent. They just think, okay, I know the government spends a lot of money on development aid and that makes me feel good. But they do not know that the government – that there is a possibility, a likely possibility, that the government could use aid to do bad things.

So what I want to say is that the news media and also public intellectuals and scholars should do more to educate the citizens to be careful, to hold their governments responsible, to use their aid to help sustainable development in developing countries instead of using foreign aid as a political tool. Only domestic stakeholders can actually make their governments responsible, so ordinary citizens should do that.

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

Thank you, Pang Xun. Yes, and please, Minister Vohiri?

**Anyaa Vohiri:**

What can we do? That's a big question. Not what, but how, also. In the last few days, I heard someone say, "We must learn to run together."

What we all bring with us is initiative for us to be able to run together, and it's not easy, because we're coming from different mindsets. So it's like questioning the way we are living, the mindset we are living with now to change it towards the future we actually want.

And whose responsibility is it? Is it China's? Is it each African country? Is it each of us in here? So the question of sustainability – I can repeat – is that we have to work together. It means non-exploitative use of our natural resources. It means taking our mutual interest into consideration. It means, perhaps, *believing* that we can make a difference, and that we must.

Sustainability is all of us getting on a train together, and putting in what we can to make sure we create a change. Thank you.

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

Thank you, Minister Vohiri, thank you. And Professor Qi?

**Qi Ye:**

Sustainability as a goal, it looks like it's pretty straightforward, right? We have a set of goals and all countries agree, so simply implement them. But it's always easier said than done. And having to— each different country, having to come with your own way of meeting the sustainability issue.

I think what China has done is very interesting, and there are some lessons that can be learned from it. Think about 1992, when the world leaders came together in Rio, in Brazil, and they agreed on this overall development strategy called sustainable development. Then next year, 1993, the Chinese government at the top level reached agreement, reached a consensus on green society and collectively adopted this sustainability as a national development strategy. It has been written in legislation, and it has also been translated into the major five-year plans, for instance.

I think that really helped quite a lot. When looking back, ever since then, a major lesson can be learned, really, about government-led efforts. But now today we look at sustainable development. The challenge is that it's no longer true we just rely solely on government effort, right? We really, really need public participation and to acknowledge a lot of issues, and to monitor how the government and the regulators do, and to make sure that what has been done really reveals improvement of the public welfare. It really also requires huge involvement from the business society, the business world, and so we no longer can just count on the government itself to take lead and make the efforts for sustainable development. We also need other parties.

Now we've added one additional layer of challenge. When we see the economy is not growing as fast as in the past, not growing as fast as we would like to see it or the government would like to see it, then sustainability may [be] sacrificed in a compromise between growth and sustainability. I think that's also a very big issue to look at. I think that

each and every country must work to figure out its own way of dealing with this issue, on the one hand, while they're making the effort for international cooperation.

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

Thank you, thank you, Professor Qi, thank you. Yes, and Peter? Your ideas?

**Peter Seligmann:**

One of the most difficult and one of the most commonly asked questions, because everyone here is here because you're trying to find solutions and you want to make a contribution. And I think the simple fact that you are in this room means you're basically are on the path to trying to be able to what you can do.

Now, there are individual behaviors that you can avoid and there are simple things of how you live your life, but it really comes down to, I believe, believing that sustainability of nature is essential to sustainability of the economy and sustainability of peace and harmony. And if you have that belief, you have a chance to figure out the right action for yourself, and you have the opportunity of figuring out the right path for your nation.

I think that there have been a lot of very interesting things said this afternoon, and I think that I would just like to turn for a second to China and to Africa. When we started Conservation International, thirty years ago – when we started CI thirty years ago, nobody was interested in sustainability. No one thought these were big issues. They have climbed all over us, and we now know how serious these issues are.

When I first came to China to discuss these issues – I actually first came to China in 1978 – but when I first came to China to discuss sustainability issues and international issues, the response was, “We are focusing on China. We are not an international leader. We do not want the responsibility of being an international leader; we want the responsibility of guiding our own nation.” Three years ago, that answer was a little softer.

Today, the answer is completely different. Today there is a very clear recognition that it is in China self-interest, it is in China's enlightened self-interest, to work really closely with

Liberia and Botswana and the DRC and the rest of the nations of Africa and the rest of the nations of the world to solve these problems. And the role that we need to push all of our nations into accepting is that responsibility.

That's a really – this is a breakthrough movement. Because when one of the greatest nations on Earth makes a choice that it is going to focus on sustainability for the planet, not just for itself, it raises an idea to the highest level: that what's good for you is good for me. That's really where we have to get to.

And that's come about because we have seven billion people and we're going toward nine billion people, and we don't have any other choice because there's no other place to go. This is our one planet. We have to take of her. I think that's what everyone needs to be focusing on. Everyone's got an individual responsibility and an individual role, and I can't and nobody here can say, "This is what you should do." You just need to engage in the search for that answer yourself, because you will find it.

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

Thank you, Peter. And thank you all. Thank for your ideas and your answers, your wonderful answers. And now you see? So many questions! Any questions, put up your hands. And give a brief introduction of yourselves. Ok, this guy – please.

**Bogan (Audience member):**

Hello, everyone, my name is Bogan. I just graduated this year from an MIT program, and I did my thesis in development aid models similar to your research, Ms. Pang Xun. Composed of the U.S. and German model and also the Chinese model, right?

And my question to you is how is sustainable is the Chinese development aid model, given the fact that it disrupts the local labor market by employing exclusively Chinese workers? It also correlates with increasing violence in the region, according to the extent of the development project – the local violent protests, right? There are also many transparency issues. They don't give any information on individual projects. Also, there is a lack of communication with and active participation by the African aid recipients.

My question to you is how sustainable is this strategy, and what is China's plan to make this ODA sustainable in the future? Thank you.

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

Which expert do you prefer to answer?

**Bogan:**

Ms. Pang Xun.

**Pang Xun:**

Ok. Thank you very much for your question. Good evening.

I'm aware of even more problems with Chinese aid, probably [more] than you. All you said is at least partially the truth, and the Chinese government sometimes just categorizes all the things that happen overseas related to aid project as some kind of overseas investment risk, or political risk. We believe that if we just increase mutual understanding we can solve these problems, but I'm very worried. Especially about the lack of transparency, as you mentioned. Because the lack of transparency arouses a lot of worries, questions and doubts about Chinese aid.

I don't know if you know this? You probably already know this, the Chinese government refused to use aid for quite a long time, and it still prefers to call it mutual benefit assistance.

In terms of the question, how is this sustainable? I do not think it's sustainable, and Chinese aid is under reform. And why is it under reform? Because it's not the long-term equilibrium. I think international standards cannot be completely ignored. Especially the model of the traditional donors, such as [spending] more money on general budget support, on social sectors and those kinds of aspects, I think will be learned very quickly by the Chinese government and by China. So I do not think the current model of Chinese aid is perfect, and it's under reform.

Another thing is that I still think the Chinese model has its own contributions to the current international governance and development. Especially paying attention to infrastructure. I think that's the unique contribution of Chinese aid. No matter whether there are how many controversies, that sector should have some donor countries focus on it, and if China is willing to take the risk and do that, the infrastructure investment, I think a lot of countries welcome that. So I think it's like China's future has to do with overseas infrastructure investment.

But anyway, back to your question, I hope to see a better model of Chinese aid, and I think we will see [one].

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

Thank you. And this girl, please.

**Mao (Audience member):**

My name is Mao Daochi, from Wildlife Conservation Society. I have a question for our African experts. First of all I want to know if you two think that wildlife can be treated as a natural resource, as natural capital, sustainably in your country. If so, in what way? In a consumptive way? For example, like in the wildlife trade or ivory stockpile trade? Or in a non-consumptive way, more like eco-tourism?

I also want to know if you think eco-tourism is really helpful for your national and local economy and also for local community livelihoods. My last question is, with the recent increases in poaching activity across Africa, have you observed these activities already affect eco-tourism? Not only in your country, but also in other countries. Thank you.

**Rule Jimmy Opelo:**

Thank you so much. Very good question. Maybe the best answer to whether wildlife is treated as natural capital is— the answer is yes. It is. And this comes from the context of definition of wildlife. The wildlife *is* a natural resource. And once we have it, we must, both for our country and for national economic gains, embrace it as part of natural capital.



Now, the issue of consumptive or non-consumptive is something that is treated differently from country to country in Africa. In Botswana, for instance – you are probably aware of this – we are non-consumptive. And it's bearing fruits in such a way that eco-tourism brings about the benefits in terms of royalties to the communities within which these natural resources are found.

On poaching, I think you are aware that poaching is not only an African problem. And it is not a China problem. It is a problem that is worldwide. We are dealing with it as much as we can, and again, it is all a thing that needs collective responsibility and concerted efforts. That's what we're doing with Kenya, what we're doing all around with other African countries. In fact, when China is ready, in terms how else we can do it better than we are doing it now. Thank you.

**Anyaa Vohiri:**

We might be only trying to make sure that we protect the wildlife. It is an international issue, I think that is what you are talking about. Illegal wildlife trade is now an international concern, so I think all of the African countries are trying to work on it. My country is starting to look at it, but then you also have the conflict between do we eat, or do we save wildlife? And of course as the head of the Environment Protection Agency, I'm glad that we save the wildlife to the extent that we can, because if you kill them all, you'll have nothing to eat.

The reality is that most of us are trying very hard to make sure that there is a balance. And let's consider the question of is there a contradiction between economic development and sustainable management of our natural resources and our environment? There is a mix there.

What are we saving the environment for, or what is economic development for, if it's not for the social, if it's not for the people? I see sustainable economic development, sustainable development [as] you have to have the social, the economic, and the environmental. If you need to harm the environment, it's not sustainable economic

development. So that's one thing that I would like that we take back with us and think about it.

Because, perhaps in most African countries, we have a three-legged pot that we use to cook on the ground. Three legs. If one leg breaks off, the soup will spill. That's how we have to see the economic, the social, and the environment. So we must protect the wildlife, all the plants and animals, because they have a contribution to make. Not only to the dollar signs, but actually to our lives.

So I thank you for that question. That's what I heard, that we should give back. Because when you're eating meat, do you think about, was it illegally done, killed, processed? And that's what's going to help the poaching and the illegal trade and the wildlife.

**Zheng Zhengqing:**

Thank you. Okay, and this guy.

**(Audience member):**

Hello. [The following segment is translated from Mandarin.] If the moderator could please translate for me? My question is very simple. I feel that apparently – China has a common saying, you can stockpile wisdom only after you stockpile food – I feel that apparently people will have a sense of environmental concern only after a certain amount of economic development. Do the panelists feel that economic development and environmental protection are naturally compatible? If so, how should we persuade developing regions, especially their relatively impoverished denizens, that we need to prioritize environmental protection now, even at the cost of some vitality from their economic development?

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

To which panelist are you directing your question? No one in particular, right? [Return to English.] Ok, so his question is about the choice between growth and environmental protection. How do you choose the priority, from the common man's perspective? Let's invite Peter and Minister Vohiri to answer.

**Peter Seligmann:**

Well, I guess the question is, is there a dilemma between having a healthy heart and healthy lungs? Or is there a dilemma between having a right arm and a left arm? You actually need both. So choosing between environment or development is a false question.

If your development destroys your environment, you will not have a healthy life. And if your environment prevents economic growth and economic vitality, you're not going to have a healthy life. So any economic strategy that pits environment against the economic is shortsighted and will not last.

**Anyaa Vohiri:**

Thank you, Peter. Sometimes we think of economic development and protecting the environment as contradictory, and they cannot be, as I just pointed out. It's not contradictory. It's how we think about it.

My job as the head of the environment in Liberia is to balance. Any company that comes to Liberia to do anything, going anywhere that may have impact on the environment, I have to give them a permit. My job is to make sure that it does not negatively impact the environment and process a certification to take care of that. So, yes, economic development does have negative impact on the environment.

One thing we have to do is ask, where does the government come into it? Is the will there to make sure that the environment— to understand what the importance of the environment is? Because unless the government understands it, we can't do very much about it.

So there is a continuous kind of balancing act with my work all the time. I don't want my people to suffer, to hurt their livelihoods. If you say, everything's protected, don't cut a tree, don't kill an animal, you're also talking about curtailing the livelihood of the people. What you can look at is, how do we do it differently? [So] that the environment doesn't suffer as a result of our lives. That's how I look at it.

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

Thank you. Ok, one more question. The girl, the girl, please.

**(Audience member):**

Hello. I'm a PHD student of SPPM. I have a question regarding both Liberia and Botswana. Renewable energy relies heavily on subsidies, government subsidies. Many countries, they put so much pressure on [the] fiscal conditions. How do you solve this kind of problem? Where does the money come from, for the subsidies? This is really a very important question to have this energy transition. Thank you.

**Rule Jimmy Opelo:**

Thank you so much, my sister there. I think that what we need to understand and what we need to talk to people about, those who have not been connected yet, [is that] it is very, very clear – in fact, it has been that way – that public funds and public funds alone cannot help all the subsidies in the development of renewable energy.

And I think that is what we have been trying to talk [about] here, that the way to go about it is in partnership and collaboration. If you imagine the economies of African countries, which is different from country to country, and [that] we have the will to do so as a country. And imagine if you take all the little money that we have and you want to answer the call of environmental responsibility. We are simply saying we are here and we have seen what we need to do, but that's why we are looking for partners here in China, partners elsewhere, partners across the globe. Thank you.

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

Ah, time flies so fast. So the last question, okay? The last question - okay! The girl. You're a lucky one.

**Ling Fei (Audience member):**

Thank you, finally I got the chance! [Laughter.] Hello, everyone. I'm Ling Fei, I'm from SPPM. Currently I'm a post-doctorate research fellow, and my research is focusing on the China-Africa relationship. In terms of natural capital, my question is about the mining industry.

Mining is regarded to contribute to government revenue, mostly in resource-rich African countries, but currently, globally, it is experiencing collapsed prices in terms of iron ore and oil. From both of your perspectives, how largely [are the current] oil or iron ore prices, or the economy, related to China? And how should Africa deal with this situation for better sustainable economic growth? Thank you.

**Rule Jimmy Opelo:**

Thank you so much for your observation and for the question. You see, that is presently what we are talking [about]. From time immemorial, from the Stone Age, we have been in a non-sustainable manner. That is what we've gotten ourselves into, and that's where the world is at the moment. We are at a crossroads, and you are asking, what are we offering?

We are saying, for instance, that one of the key things we should have done a long time ago, even before the natural capital concept, was the issue of economic diversification. It has taken so many nations, including the developed world, to diversify primarily from the mining industry as a source of income. And what we should do is what we should have done from the beginning. Diversification, and the concept of natural capital.

This is where we are. I know we've already mentioned the concept, but this is the way we should be doing things. The collapse of the markets with our mineral resources is because what else can replace it? The three-legged pot, the one the Minister was talking about, is where we should be – balanced in whatever we are doing, until we recuperate with our sectors of our economies. Thank you.

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

Thank you. And the Minister is very kind. She [will] allow one extra question from an African student. Ok, you! Yes, you.

Audience Member: First of all, I would like to thank you for your very interesting [talk]. In fact, this is very good timing for this issue. So my question was for my African experts. Because now we see that the problem now facing the world was so much created by the

developed countries, by the Western countries, and at this time Africa is now having to pay the price.

So, what— my understanding is that if you are not part of the problem, then there is no reason to be part of the solution. So, if we are going to deal with this issue, how can Africa be treated in a fair way, so we can assign responsibility?

**Anyaa Vohiri:**

We might not be part of the problem, but we have to be part of the solution. The fact that the developed countries did it in a way that has destroyed our natural resources and is still risking the rest of our natural resources doesn't mean that the non-Western world – the other, the non-developed world – should ignore that.

We cannot afford to have the way they did it, or the past way of looking at it was we'll mess it up, and then we clean it up. We cannot afford to do that anymore. This is our only one planet. So we all have to be thinking about how to solve the problem.

As I understand perfectly, after all of the conferences – I was in Paris when the gavel came down, so – we're trying to put all of the solutions in place. The reality is we all have to get on board to solve what the problems are. The fact that those guys messed it up by what I call sucking it all up, because [think of the] nice oil, you go into the ocean and you suck up all the oil, and digging it all up, you go into the ground and you dig up all of the iron ore, and you cut it all down, you cut down all of the trees, that won't solve the problems we have before us right now.

We cannot afford to do it the way it has been done. We have to change our mindset and look at a new way of doing it. Thank you.

**Rule Jimmy Opelo:**

I just want to add to my minister's answer here. I think if we cannot be part of this because we did not contribute, first of all, in my opinion, it would be a little more irresponsible. The other thing I want to mention here because we are in the student community, I would like

us to have a look, there's a book, I think it's called [...] Land, call it up if you have a chance. You will begin to understand why we cannot point fingers.

We need each other. We need each other now; we need each other going forward. This has been proven, and this is true. The intergovernmental panel on climate change has so many times brought this before the United Nations Convention on Climate Change, a number of nations collaborating on climate change. The best way to go forward is through what we understand together, and that is why the concept of common but differentiated responsibility was put into place.

This time around, it's about answering the call to save our planet. Thank you.

**Zheng Zhenqing:**

So, thank you. Thank you all, our experts. Let's give our warm applause to our experts. [Applause.] And now we have come to the end of our forum. I would like to invite Professor Qi Ye to give a concluding remark.

**Qi Ye:**

It is always impossible to summarize such a rich discussion, including today the great questions you all have asked. It may also be difficult to say anything here after a long conversation. Let me just quickly highlight some of the points I heard from this conversation.

First – surprise, surprise – we all seem to agree with each other, we've reached a consensus that this issue of sustainability is important for China, for Africa, and indeed for the entire world. We now have an agreement highlighting the past MDG, SDG and adding now one more dimension of change in Paris, and we are ready to move on.

Second, we all recognize the importance of global and international governance for this. This includes the many different aspects of mechanisms, including investment, including ODA, including [all] the plans and mechanisms of working together. But this governance must start somewhere, and perhaps the first place for building working governance,

working global governance, is to avoid finger pointing. We have to work it out. We can spend days and years and decades of pointing fingers at each other without solving the problem.

Third, the very thorough discussion about this idea of how you balance the environment and development. How do you balance self-interest and global interest? We realized that it's not either-or and by doing, by making good globally, you are making your self-interest fulfilled. Vice versa, by helping yourself get fresh air, clean water, safe food, you are helping the world achieve sustainability.

And fourthly, when it comes to the implementation issues, when it comes to what and how to do it and how to implement these grand plans, we again must start somewhere. We have to consider each different country, each different region, with its own specific social, political and cultural context. Now that's perhaps why we are here, right? Right after your successful visit to the Eco Forum, you brought to us the spirit from that, to this university.

We are happy to see these young faces. Great passion, huge enthusiasm for these sustainability issues, in particular here for sustainability in a China-African context. Once again, I want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for this conversation. I am sure we will continue this conversation in the future. Thank you. [Applause.]