

Opening Ceremony of WCF Establishment Process and Ministerial Forum

The Opening Ceremony of World Coastal Forum (WCF) Establishment Process and Ministerial Forum was held in Yancheng, Jiangsu Province of China on 10 – 11 January 2022, both online and offline. More than 300 people, including representatives from domestic and foreign government departments, international organizations and foreign embassies in China, experts, scholars, and youth representatives, attended the meeting.

Chu Yonghong, deputy governor of Jiangsu Provincial People's Government of China gave a welcome speech. He introduced Jiangsu's practice and experience in promoting high-quality green development in coastal areas, and put forward corresponding measures such as implementing the green mission, building an institutional platform for global ecological governance, promoting the practice of research achievement in industries and enhancing the efficiency of ecological governance.

Wang Hong, Vice Minister of Natural Resources and Administrator of the State Oceanic Administration of China, attended and addressed the Opening Ceremony of WCF Establishment Process and Ministerial Forum. He introduced China's philosophy, policies and practical experience in promoting ecological civilization construction and achieving high-quality development to the international communities, and put forward major measures such as building a new pattern for land and sea space protection and development, improving the land and sea space governance, promoting the ecological protection and restoration of land and sea

space, and strengthening international cooperation in coastal ecological protection. He also reported on Chinese schemes and valuable experiences in promoting the sustainable development of coastal areas to the world.

Qu Dongyu, Director General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, gave a speech about the ecological importance of coastal areas and the significance of threats they face, and emphasized the need for sustainable management of coastal zones based on the integrated and holistic design of land use and water resources planning between terrestrial development and coastal protection. Reflecting the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration and the "Caring for Coasts" initiative, he expressed FAO's willingness to work together with other stakeholders and to increase sustainability in coastal zones, so that they are prosperous and productive for people and the planet.

Martha Rojas Urrego, Secretary General of the Convention on Wetlands of International Importance Especially as Waterfowl Habitat (Ramsar Convention), expressed her thanks to China for its leadership in hosting COP15 of the Conventional Biological Diversity in Kunming in April and May and COP14 of the Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar) in Wuhan, China in November 2022. She emphasized Ramsar's commitment to promoting conservation and wise use of coastal wetlands, which is reflected through its resolutions.

Bruno Oberle, Director General of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, affirmed the important role of the WCF, and issued a call for the protection of coastal wetlands represented by mangroves, especially for its great contribution to deal with climate-related disasters. He praised China's achievements in strengthening ecological and environmental protection, and called for the cooperation of IUCN and China governments at all levels to deal with threats faced by coastal areas.

Ministerial officials and representatives of relevant departments including: Sergey M. Anoprienko, the Deputy Minister for Natural Resources and Environment, Russian Federation; Rebecca Loustau Lalanne, the Climate Change Department Principal Secretary, Ministry of Agriculture, Climate Change and Environment, Seychelles; Alfredo Mamani Salinas, Vice Minister of Strategic Development for Natural Resources, Ministry of Environment, Peru; Zac Goldsmith, Minister for Pacific and the Environment, Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs, United Kingdom; Juan Nicolas Galarza, Vice Minister of Territorial Environmental Planning, Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, Colombia; Helena Vieira, Director General of Maritime Policy, Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Portugal; Chuop Paris, Director General of General Directorate of Environmental Knowledge and Information, Ministry of Environment, Cambodia; and Pamuji Lestari, Acting Director General for Marine Spatial Management, Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries, Indonesia, all shared the measures and practices in coastal ecological protection and restoration taken by their country, and called for strengthening coastal ecological protection and rational utilization through international cooperation and adopting pragmatic and effective solutions.

Ha-sung Jang, Ambassador of the Republic of Korea to China, congratulated China on successfully hosting the World Coastal Forum Establishment Process, briefly reviewed the history of China and ROK's cooperation around the protection of coastal areas, and stated that the coasts and oceans of the world are interconnected, so it is particularly important for the international community to cooperate to protect the coastal ecosystem.

Francois Commeinhes, Mayor of Sete, Herault, France, introduced the ecological resources and protection history of Saite City, and called for all people to do their part, to jointly build a society where man and nature live in harmony.

Zhou Bin, Acting Mayor of Yancheng Municipal People's Government, Jiangsu Province, welcomed the participants on behalf of the local organizer, introduced the achievements of Yancheng City in protecting World Heritage and wetland ecological conservation, shared with audience Yancheng's future plans to promote sound environmental legislation, carry out the conservation of migratory birds, promote blue carbon projects, and strengthen ecological education and popularization amongst citizens.

Zhang Xinsheng, Honorary President of Yellow Sea Wetland Institute, President of IUCN (2012.9-2021.9), provided a briefing on the *Initiative to establish the World Coastal Forum*, which calls for institutionalizing the establishment process for the World Coastal Forum, expounds on the significance, objectives and pathway for establishing the WCF, and expresses the hope of the international community to build the WCF into a platform that brings together all stakeholders around the world, promotes coastal ecological conservation based on natural and scientific evidence, coordinates objectives and actions, and acts as a catalyst for action on major international processes and Initiatives such as the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, UN Decade of Restoration and Decade of Ocean Science for Sustainable Development, Kunming Declaration, Glasgow Climate Pact and Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.