

Building Eco-Civilization: Green transformation and transition

19 - 21 July 2013, Guiyang

IISD Vice-President (International) Mark Halle spoke at the 2013 Eco-Forum Global (EFG), China's only state-level international conference focused on eco-civilization. The conference was held in Guiyang, the capital of the country's poverty-stricken southwestern province of Guizhou. Opened by the Chinese Vice Premier Zhang Gaoli, the forum emphasized green industry, green urbanization and green transition, and committed to acting as a platform for open dialogue and working to bridge effective solutions for China's big transformation to an eco-civilization. IISD's Distinguished Fellow Arthur Hanson and IISD Board Member Pan Jiahua also attended the EFG.

Dialogue Between Switzerland and Guizhou

IISD assisted in organizing the sub-forum mandated to draw on Swiss experience to help Guizhou—which is similarly landlocked and mountainous—to avoid industry-led, carbon-intensive development and instead to “leapfrog” rapidly to a form of green development consistent with eco-civilization. Halle was joined by H.E. Ulrich Maurer, president of the Swiss Confederation, and Mr. Chen Min'er, governor of Guizhou Province, along with many other leading experts. The sub-forum covered many topics, including: sustainable land-use planning, natural resources management, climate change mitigation and adaptation, and public-private partnerships.

In the opening speech of the second panel, Halle emphasized the significance of cities in the struggle to reduce humanity's carbon footprint. He introduced key elements that characterize sustainable development in world-leading Swiss cities in comparison to cities in other countries. Unlike many others, the Swiss approach is not largely focused on measurement and quantitative targets, but instead on a process of constant and steady improvement. A key measure—the “Energy Cities” movement—is uniquely organized: as a government-supported private voluntary association, it organizes a series of services for its members, including assessment by independent consultants, development of indicators and comparative metrics. The movement is expanding quickly, growing into a powerful network with some 400-500 members. This and other particular aspects of Swiss experience need to be examined to identify lessons that might be relevant to a land-locked, mountainous province like Guizhou.

Eco Civilization: Wisdom of the East and the West

Halle then participated in a live television debate discussing how core values embedded in Eastern and Western philosophies and societies can potentially contribute to building eco-civilization.

Guiyang Consensus

The three-day dialogue culminated in the release of the 2013 *Guiyang Consensus*, which outlines the outlook for eco-civilization over the coming years. It complements the post-2015 global sustainable development agenda through four pillars: (i) green development and sectoral transition, (ii) social harmony and inclusive growth, (iii) ecological recovery and environmental governance and (iv) eco-values. In the consultation process, Halle advised that eco-civilization is the destination one must reach in the medium term, and policies, regulations and approaches need to be re-examined and re-designed to support transformative actions and major shifts. Halle also pointed out that China is uniquely positioned to show the leadership needed to move directly and quickly towards an eco-civilization, leap-frogging over the stages that other countries have often mistakenly passed through.

Comments are welcomed in English to Mark Halle (mhalle@iisd.org), or in Chinese or English to IISD China program (iisdchina@gmail.com).

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