



## Speech at the Opening Ceremony

Børge Brende, Vice Chairperson  
(November 15, 2011)

**Minister Zhou, Vice Minister and New Secretary General of CCICED Mr. Li, Colleagues on the Council, Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The world is at a moment of extreme volatility and uncertainty that has far reaching implications for sustainable development. It is becoming ever more important that we develop a long term vision of how to create synergies between economic growth and the protection of the environment. The solution recognized by the political leadership in China is a change of economic development mode, including a green transformation.

When we met last year, Environmental Protection Minister Mr. Zhou said it this way: “China will seek a path of environmental protection featuring low cost, high efficiency, less carbon emission and sustainability.” Over the lifetime of CCICED, the teams and advice have changed from single issue concerns without the shelf-type of advice from experiences in more developed nations to complex and coupled issues that typically require transformative and innovative changes in society. Here, the more developed nations have less to offer in terms of experience. Climate change, river basin management and biodiversity maintenance are only some of the ground up challenges that CCICED in later years has advised on. Increasingly the advice has been that China must show the way for the rest of the world through concrete actions, pilot schemes, and innovative coupling of environmental and development policy issues. For China, when it comes to this new breed of coupled and complex issues that challenge more and more, they are met by the credo that in China the future is not studied in order to discover what lies ahead, instead in China the future is decided.

China will need to stay on the leading edge of policy transformation while taking into account changes in the national sustainable development approaches. One key in this regard is the so-called capital approach to sustainability. That is, the recognition that the welfare of the population can be considered as the rent of the total wealth of society. This total wealth



consists not only of real capital, like infrastructure, buildings and other real capital assets, nor of financial wealth, but also consists of natural wealth in the forms of natural resources and services from the environment, as well as human and social capital. To secure sustainability, a balanced approach is needed where sound management of all the different types of capital is secured. Thus, environmental issues are increasingly interlinked with questions of how human, social and more traditional economic wealth is managed.

The next ten years will see the arrival of an avalanche of technology, particularly in the areas of biotechnology and genetics, computer science and energy, and resource efficiency. Many of these new technologies could have highly positive environmental impacts, from reducing emissions to enhanced research predictability. Still, we need to be aware that, at the global level, complex systems from the world's oceans and climate to its trade and financial processes appear to be much more vulnerable to disturbances and abrupt changes than had been previously understood. Current governance systems struggle to cope with these complex risks, while many of our institutions are designed to respond to the challenges of another age. We are especially bad at developing coherent responses to cross-cutting social, economic, and environmental threats and have few examples of real policy coherence to point to. Minister Zhou, maybe the world can learn from the processes we have in this respect at the China Council.

Thank you.