



Dear Vice Minister and Chief engineer from The Ministry of Environmental Protection, Mr. Lu Xinyuan.

Dear Leaders of local Environmental Protection Bureaus.  
Ladies and Gentlemen.

I am very happy to be here today and to address you at the opening of the Seminar on Sino-Norwegian Environmental Collaboration.



[Two animated photos, from China and Norway].

As I told you last night, at our very nice dinner at the hotel, I have just returned from the Sichuan province. There I saw a little piece of your natural heritage, including the fascinating panda bear. China is a key international actor in so many areas of global politics, and China's development is of great importance for a global sustainable development.

The Sino-Norwegian cooperation has lasted for more than a decade. We have developed a common understanding and strengthened capacity in dealing with important environmental challenges.

At this Sino-Norwegian EXPO-seminar, we will share experiences on how serious environmental problems can be reduced or solved, and we will share lessons learned from some of our projects.



Let me start by underlining how dependent we are on our nature. Nature has an intrinsic value, and we have an ethical responsibility to care for it. But still, our food and energy security strongly depend on biodiversity, and so is our resilience our vulnerability to natural hazards such as fires and flooding. Biodiversity loss has negative effects on our health, material wealth and it largely limits our freedom of choice.

Nature is experienced as source of inspiration, recreation and pure physical energy. This is what we mean when we here at EXPO say: 'Norway. Powered by Nature', and this is what we want to share with the visitors who come here to the Norwegian pavilion.



The effects of global warming are strongest and most visible in the Arctic. The Arctic is warming at almost twice the global level. In Norway we can see the glaciers retreat. For me it is a strong experience to see how the nature where I grew up is changing.

Climate changes in the High North are proceeding quicker than previously anticipated and that they will be felt by everybody in the region. Last September, the UN General Secretary Ban Ki Moon visited Svalbard and the Arctic. He experienced for himself the consequences of climate change, as he witnessed the shrinking of the Arctic sea ice.

A special focus for the research in Svalbard is particularly on monitoring the Arctic and the consequences related to ice. I appreciate that Chinese scientist also have a research station for monitoring the environment in Svalbard.



Norway appreciates the measures and targets put forward by the Government of China to address climate change, and as I told you yesterday, we recognize the gradually enhanced leadership of China's government in global environmental affairs.

Norway, like China, has its' challenges on this area. However, Norway has also made some progress and some experiences that also could be helpful for other countries, including China. We will hear more about Norway's climate policy later on in this seminar.

Climate change is closely interlinked with other environmental challenges, such as pollution and the loss of biodiversity.

We are therefore also encouraged to see how the Ministry of Environmental Protection increasingly is playing a role in issues related to climate change in Chinese politics.



The third edition of the *Global Biodiversity Outlook* has recently been launched. It tells us that the state of the world's biodiversity is critical. Not since the extinction of the dinosaurs, has the earth experienced a greater loss of biodiversity. It is our responsibility to reverse this trend.

About 60 years ago, the lynx in Scandinavia was nearly hunted to extinction. But hunting became forbidden in all of Scandinavia, and today we have a viable population of lynx.

I strongly believe that management of nature must be based on knowledge. If we can not agree on facts and numbers, it is impossible to agree on measures. We therefore need to build up a strong science-based platform internationally for Governments and others, to turn to for scientific support when decisions are to be taken.

This is why we find the establishing of an Intergovernmental platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services essential. It is my hope that we at the high level session on biodiversity, during the UNs General Assembly in September this year, can agree to establish such a panel. I also hope that China will support the establishment. Norway wants the Panel to be as successful as the UN panel on climate change has been. For this to happen, the panel should provide scientific information and contribute to capacity building in the field of biodiversity.

Last year Norway got a new Nature Diversity Act. Knowledge was an important issue when we established the act. Mr Torbjørn Lange will explain more about this later.



We are very pleased that a new project on biodiversity and climate change is under development in the Norway - China cooperation.

The project will support the Sichuan provincial government to develop a Biodiversity and Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan. It will also provide support and input to national level policies. It will assess how negative impacts from climatic changes on biological diversity can be avoided, and it will also give input to the formulation of national policy framework for biofuels, so that negative climate change and biodiversity impacts can be avoided. These activities will link directly to elements of Sichuan Strategy and Action Plan.

In total, we hope that this project could be a valuable input to your development of a National Strategy and Action Plan for biodiversity and climate change. Mister Kjell Tore Hansen from the Norwegian Directorate for Nature Management, will talk more about this project later in the seminar.



The Arctic is generally considered to be a pristine and very clean area. But the Arctic is actually being affected by human activities, and ecological toxins are found in the Arctic environment and ecosystem: in the air, soil and sediments, in snow and ice, in birds, other animals and humans. This contamination is caused by long-range transport of pollutants by air and ocean currents. These ecosystems are very valuable, and we have to do our best efforts to protect them. But since these substances spread by air and ocean, it is pertinent that we have strong international regulations to protect us from these pollutants.

Concrete effects of persistent organic pollutants (POPs) high up in the food chain have been documented in most of the Arctic. For instance, POPs have probably led to the weakening of the immune systems of polar bears, gulls and harp seal. The picture shows a polar bear. PCB levels in polar bears in Svalbard are 2-6 times higher than in polar bears from Alaska and Canada. Furthermore, Svalbard's polar bears have higher levels of certain kinds of brominated flame retardants.

We should, however, also be encouraged by the fact that, in Norway and other developed countries, emissions from industrial sources have been greatly reduced. Levels of some known ecological toxins, such as PCBs, are dropping. We see growing problems arising in connection with new substances that prove to be ecological toxins, such as the brominated flame retardants.



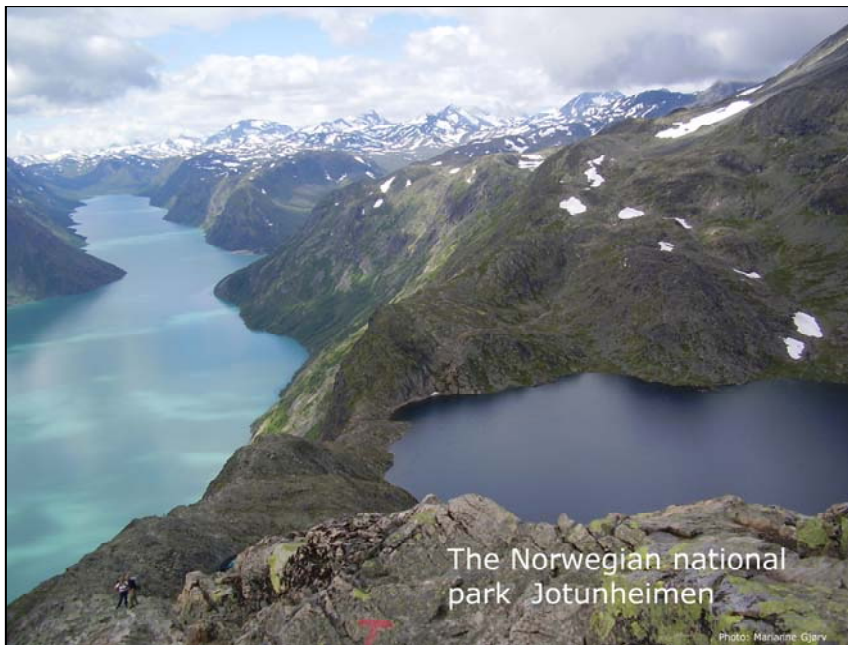


Mercury pollution spreads to areas far from emission sources. Norway, and the Arctic area, receives mercury from pollution sources far away. In Norway, nationwide advisories to limit consumption of certain large predatory freshwater fish species have been issued because of high levels of mercury.

Norway is very glad that China now supports the development of a legally binding instrument for mercury. A global regime must regulate all sources of mercury pollution, and also the export and import of mercury.

There is already a successful project on mercury under the Sino-Norwegian environmental cooperation. Last night we had a signing ceremony at the hotel to mark the opening of phase two of this project. I hope that this, and possibly other projects, can support further Chinese policy development in the mercury field. In this seminar, the final session tomorrow will be on hazardous substances. It will give us more food for thought and room for discussion on the mercury issue and other related issues.

The picture is from the project in Guizhou and shows how the collection of water samples from the river next to a small scale mercury smelting.



We are encouraged by what the Chinese government has achieved so far to tackle environmental problems. Still, environmental challenges in China are serious, with many unresolved problems. It is in the provinces and at the local level that environmental protection is actually carried out and nature is preserved. Your task as Environmental Protection Bureau's in the provinces, are thus of immense importance.

Let me now conclude this opening speech by thanking in particular the Ministry of Environment Protection, Foreign Economic Cooperation Office, and the Norwegian Climate and Pollution Agency for co-organising this seminar with the Ministry of Environment. Sincere thanks also to all involving partners.

From the Chinese side: Chinese Research Academy of Environmental Sciences, Tsinghua University, Chinese Academy of Sciences, Environmental Bureaus in Hunan, Guizhou and Xining.

From the Norwegian side: The Directorate for Nature Management, Norwegian Institute for Water research and SINTEF.

I am looking forward to follow your work and to take part in future events under this project.

On behalf of the Ministry, I wish you a successful seminar.



The Nobel Peace Price Laureate Al Gore held his Nobel Lecture in Oslo in December 10 in 2007. He ended his speech by these words:

“We have everything we need to get started, save perhaps political will...”,  
and luckily he added; “...but political will is a renewable resource.”