

# 2019 Yancheng Consensus

Sep 30<sup>th</sup>, 2019 Yancheng, China

On July 5, 2019, the UNESCO World Heritage Committee, at its 43<sup>rd</sup> session, decided to inscribe the nominated “Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of the Yellow Sea-Bohai Gulf of China (Phase I)” onto the World Heritage List. This is the highest possible recognition by the international community of the outstanding universal value of this property .

Following the successful holding of the *International Symposium on the Coastal Wetlands of Yellow (Bohai) Sea Yancheng* for two consecutive years in 2017 and 2018, the resulting Yancheng Yellow Sea Wetland World Heritage Declarations gathered a broad international consensus. With the theme of World Natural Heritage Conservation Management & Sustainable Development, the *2019 Yellow & Bohai Sea Wetlands International Conference* was successfully held in Yancheng City, Jiangsu Province, China, from September 28 to 30, 2019. It was attended by more than 400 representatives from 22 countries including governments, important international organizations, well-known research institutions, enterprises and Chinese coastal wetland sites.

This session is the first international conference after the successful inscription of Yancheng Yellow Sea Wetland. The theme is clear, rich in content, novel in form, integrated in activities. Experts and scholars at the conference held academic exchanges through high-level dialogues, reaching consensus on aspects of the

scientific protection and management of the World Heritage sites, public participation in their protection, ecological education, sustainable development and the eco-economic circle around the Yellow Sea. The resulting innovative and leading pragmatic results included the following.

1. The China National Forestry and Grassland Administration held the 1<sup>st</sup> Working Group Meeting of the Leaders on the Nomination for World Heritage of “The Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of the Yellow Sea-Bohai Gulf of China (Phase II)”, officially launching the **Phase II application for World Heritage status**. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Meeting of Alliance Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of Yellow & Bohai Sea was also held, and the logo of the Alliance was published.
2. The **conservation management and sustainable development of Yancheng Yellow Sea Wetland** has entered a new stage. During the meeting, extensive and in-depth systematic discussions of experts laid the theoretical foundation for the scientific protection and management of the Yellow Sea Wetland Heritage Site and its future sustainable development. The conference officially launched the logo of “the Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of the Yellow Sea-Bohai Gulf of China (Phase I)”, systematically creating an international brand for the Yellow Sea Wetland World Heritage Site.
3. The exchanges and cooperation between the areas and cities along the East Asian-Australasian Flyway (EAAF) have opened up new prospects. During the

meeting, representatives from countries along the EAAF, such as Russia, the United States, New Zealand, South Korea, the Philippines, Cambodia etc. as well as representatives from Chinese cities such as Tianjin, Shanghai, Dongying etc., jointly adopted the “**East Asian-Australasian Flyway City Alliance Initiative Proposal**”.

4. The level and pattern of international cooperation and exchange of the **Yellow Sea Wetland Research Institute** is being continuously enhanced. During the meeting, the Yellow Sea Wetland Research Institute signed cooperation agreements with South Korea’s Kyungpook National University, the Paulson Institute, Eco Foundation Global etc. The Institute awarded international volunteer certificates to 8 international experts and scholars from the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), International Crane Foundation (ICF), Wetlands International (WI) etc. A high-level international volunteer team was formally established. Five top international experts and scholars from the University of Cambridge, Dutch University of Groningen, Tongji University etc. were appointed as additional special research fellows, expanding and diversifying the expertise of the team.
  
5. The Yellow & Bohai Sea Wetlands International Conference, Yancheng **International Bird Watching Equipment Exhibition and Yancheng International Bird Race** formed the overall linkage mode of “one meeting, one exhibition, one competition”, which achieved good results, extending the

international influence of the conference. With the continuous improvement of convening power, internationalization, marketization, and public participation, extensive experience has been accumulated in creating the Yancheng International Wetland Festival, an international event for the protection of wetlands and migratory birds.

During the meeting, the participating experts pragmatically discussed and brainstormed. They put forward a list of important suggestions for reference and implementation by Yancheng, other local governments and international participants, including the following.

1. It is proposed to establish a **City Alliance along the EAAF** to strengthen the close ties and cooperation of cities along the flyway, promote the protection of wetlands and migratory birds and the sustainable development of cities.
2. Recent decisions of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, the Convention on Migratory Species and the Convention on Biological Diversity call for the establishment of a “**Global Coastal Forum**”. It was suggested that Yancheng can play a key role in this, for example by offering to the Ramsar Secretariat the possibility of setting up an office in Yancheng to support the Forum and build Yancheng into an international wetland city with first-class international standards.
3. It is recommended to develop Yancheng Yellow Sea Wetland into a world-class

**demonstration of sustainable coastal wetland management** achieving objectives for the integrity of the coastal wetland ecosystem and the wellbeing of migratory birds, biodiversity and local communities by carrying out evidence-based ecological assessment and restoration, especially to strengthen a) the comprehensive management of the **invasive alien species *Spartina alterniflora*** and b) the protection, management and creation of **high-tide roost sites** for waterbirds close to their main intertidal feeding sites.

4. The World Heritage sites can also become a showcase for the research on and conservation and management of “**Working Coastal Wetlands**” to achieve conservation of birds and sustainable development of local communities, focussing on the intertidal zone for shellfish fisheries and on the artificial wetlands above the sea wall, including salt ponds and aquaculture.
5. It is suggested that a flexible, dynamic and responsive **eco-tourism** development team should be set up to plan a high-quality eco-tourism conservation management and sustainable development strategy, according to clear criteria, focusing on the well-being and cultural needs of the people, as well as the protection and health of wetlands and the birds that depend on them. This should be for the Phase I property in relation to the entire serial World Heritage site, building on international experience and establishing world-class standards. At its core should be a focus on strengthening and maintaining public participation and ecological education.

The conference proved to be pragmatic and fruitful. Delegates from all countries expressed their affirmation of the work, and thanks to the Conference's Supporters (China National Forestry and Grassland Administration, China National Commission for UNESCO), Hosts (Yancheng Municipal People's Government) and Organizers (Eco Foundation Global, Alliance of Migratory Bird Sanctuaries along the Coast of Yellow and Bohai Sea). They also hoped that Yancheng and relevant parties would make good use of the important platform of the International Conference to continue to carry out the research on the Eco-Economic Circle around the Yellow Sea and make efforts to build a global community of coastal wetland life!