



Executive Summary for 2018 International Symposium on the Coastal Wetlands of Yellow (Bohai) Sea Yancheng

With the strong leadership of the municipal CPC committee and the municipal government, the “2018 International Symposium on the Coastal Wetlands of Yellow (Bohai) Sea Yancheng” was successfully held in Yancheng from November 16 to 17, 2018, under the joint sponsorship of the People’s Government of Yancheng, IUCN Asia Regional Office, and the Ramsar Regional Center - East Asia and under the organization of Eco Foundation Global (EFG).

The Symposium follows the guidance of the report of the 19th CPC National Congress and Xi Jinping’s thought on ecological civilization, implements the party and state leaders’ instructions and requirements on enhancing coastal wetland protection, follows the example of the 25th resolution of the 13th Meeting of the Conference of the Contracting Parties to the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, actively deals with the widely concerned issues like the “intertidal zone habitat protection of Yellow (Bohai) Sea”, comprehensively fulfills the new development path of “Coastal Opening, Connection with Shanghai, Green Transformation and Green Leap”, actively expands the new perspective of ecological

industry and sustainable development, and deeply explores the new mode of Yellow (Bohai) Sea wetlands conservation and trans-regional cooperation. The Symposium has further improved Yancheng's international image and unique influence, and contributed to and formed a good environment for the city's application for the World Heritage. As a result, Yancheng has become a model of China's ecological civilization and the world's wetlands conservation. The summary and work advice on the Symposium are as follows:

I. Overview and Significance of the Symposium

At the Symposium, prospective, strategic and practical issues were communicated in including wetland protection mechanisms and systems, comprehensive and scientific management planning and treatment cases of coastal wetlands, ecological conservation and sustainable development, and coastal areas' integration with regional and global mechanisms. In particular, deep exchange was made on the scientific protection of the coastal wetlands of Yellow (Bohai) Sea and sustainable development. Also, discussion was made on the Yancheng-led initiation of the "Yellow and Bohai Sea Coastal Wetlands Conservation Alliance" and the promotion of Yancheng Coastal Wetlands Research Institute. Respectively, 1 opening

ceremony, 1 closing ceremony, 2 field visits, 4 parallel conferences, and 5 high-level dialogues were held. Besides, 1 preparatory meeting, 1 international expert consultation, and 1 training session were rolled out, as well as activities like guest meetings, media interviews, banquets and contract signing ceremonies. The *Yancheng Initiative* was issued at the Symposium. In total, more than 100 distinguished guests (including self-paying ones) attended the Symposium from 13 countries and regions including China, the US, the UK, France, Switzerland, Netherlands, Iceland, Canada, Singapore, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Senegal and Hong Kong.

The substantial support from the Nature Reserve Management Department of the State Forestry and Grassland Administration, the National Commission of China for UNESCO, China Wildlife Conservation Association, the Chinese and Foreign Humanities Exchange Center of Ministry of Education, Chinese National Committee for Man and the Biosphere Programme, Chinese National Geography, Wetlands International, BirdLife International, Paulson Institute, the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), and East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership Secretariat contributed to the success of the Symposium. From Tianjin, Hebei, Shandong and Liaoning, delegates of nature reserves in the Yellow



(Bohai) Sea region also attended the Symposium and jointly founded the “Yellow and Bohai Sea Coastal Wetlands Conservation Alliance”. Well-known experts and scholars from the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Peking University, Nanjing University, Beijing Forestry University, Ocean University of China and Nanjing Normal University also participated in the Symposium.

At the opening ceremony and parallel seminar on the first day, Secretary Yuan DAI delivered an opening speech and guests fully discussed on issues like the conservation of Yellow and Bohai Sea coastal wetlands. On the second day, at the high-level dialogue and the closing ceremony, Mayor Lubao CAO gave a closing address, and guests delivered high-quality and high-level demonstration and exchange and discussed on the work orientation and development direction of Yancheng Coastal Wetlands Research Institute. On the third day, the training session in the theme of the “Formulation and Tracking of Wetlands Management Plans” was held successfully under the sponsorship of the IUCN Asia Regional Office. Several international experts trained delegates from wetland conservation organizations in the Yellow (Bohai) Sea region and core technicians from Yancheng’s relevant departments like municipal bureaus, commissions and offices, further improving the international level of

coastal wetlands conservation and management.

The Symposium has further improved Yancheng's international image of responsibility and its unique influence, forming a good international environment for the city's application for the World Heritage. The Symposium has built a model mechanism of scientific protection for Yancheng, explored the city's long-term utilization of resources and sustainable development, and laid a solid foundation for Yancheng to become a World Wetland City and to develop ecological industry, allowing Yancheng to lead the ecological civilization in China and wetlands conservation in the world.

II. Main Characteristics of the Symposium

As the first international conference of significance after the Coastal Wetlands of Yellow (Bohai) Sea being listed in the List of World Heritage of UNESCO in 2018 in China, and being investigated by relevant experts of the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the Symposium moreover marks the important international conference convened after the crucial indicators and requirements on enhancement of the conservation of coastal wetlands were proposed by the Party and state leaders in the field. The overall characteristics of the Symposium are concretely as

follows:

(I). With prominent international characteristics, it further promotes the connection between regions and international community. Attracting more than 100 attendees (including self-paying ones) from 13 countries or regions like the United States, the United Kingdom, France and Switzerland, the Symposium has an international influence that has been strengthened constantly. Martha Rojas Urrego, Secretary General of Ramsar has also dedicatedly sent congratulatory letter to the opening of the Symposium. Furthermore, a number of important sessions involved are presided over by foreign experts and scholars, and part of the significant conference documents like *Yancheng Initiative* are drafted by foreign experts.

(II). With activities in abundant forms and contents, arrangements of the Symposium are with distinct purposes. Adopting diversified conference forms, the Symposium has arranged a wonderful and tight schedule. In the two-day Symposium, over 20 events have been unveiled, in which attendees have thoroughly fused together with the atmosphere to lay the foundation for in-depth probe into various topics. Bureaus, committees and offices of districts and counties in Yancheng, as well as representatives of the

conservation area have deeply participated in various events of the Symposium, and conducted profound exchanges with experts and scholars at home and abroad on the system and mechanism of protection and management, ecological tourism, ecological agriculture development and other field problems in Yancheng, further building Yancheng's confidence in its development road of "City Development by Ecology" and "Coastal Opening, Connection with Shanghai, Green Transformation and Green Leap".

(III). Topics drawing high attention from international community lay the foundation for international cooperation.

Topics of the Symposium center on the pressing hot issues closely concerned by the international community. Such precious species with extensive international influence including "red-crowned crane", "elk" and "spoon-billed sandpiper" have drawn the common attention of representatives from different countries and regions. Around issues of international concern, Yancheng Coastal Wetlands Research Institute has signed the Memorandum of Cooperation with the Ramsar Regional Center – East Asia, which has paved the way for Yancheng to introduce more resources of international cooperation.

(IV). Multi-dimensional media reports through multi-channel

display comprehensive promotion effect. Before the Symposium, CCTV-4 has launched the special report titled “Come into Yancheng - A City that Grows” to introduce the prominent effect of Yancheng in green transformation. As of December 5, 2018, relevant news and entries of the Chinese keyword of the Symposium have hit over 596,000 in Google search, while those of the English keyword over 6,870. The number of relevant news and forwarding in Baidu has exceeded 5,820. Such major state media as people.cn and m.xinhuanet.com, and reputable domestic and local media have reported the Symposium through multiple channels. In addition, the official foreign language websites of IUCN and East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership Secretariat have conducted comprehensive publicity and report on the Symposium at the first time, which have demonstrated favorable communicating effect.

III. Significant Achievements of the Symposium

During the Symposium, main leaders of the municipal party committee and the municipal government have presented their resolution and charisma for protecting the coastal wetlands of Yancheng, winning widespread praise. They have loudly spoken out the “voice of Yancheng”, displayed the “actions of Yancheng”, and printed the “international business card” of Yancheng. The

achievements of the Symposium are mainly manifested by the following five aspects:

(I).The Symposium responds to the feedback of IUCN on listing the Tiaozini Wetland into the first batch of declaration, which accumulates extensive consensus for the later sprint declaration for the World Heritage Site. The Symposium has completely researched and discussed issues including the phase I declaration, marginal adjustment and protection & management of Yellow (Bohai) Sea Yancheng, which have gained the general concern of the international community. The important commitment of zoning the Tiaozini Wetland into the area of protection on the Symposium has accumulated extensive consensus in the international community for the promotion of sprint declaration of Yancheng for the World Heritage Site.

(II). The Symposium responds to the feedback of IUCN on the series of declaration problems of Yellow (Bohai) Sea regions, gradually cultivating Yancheng to the pioneer and example of Chinese coastal wetland conservation. During the Symposium, Yancheng under the support of the National Forestry and Grassland Administration has vigorously taken the lead to organize representatives of administrative authorities of China Yellow (Bohai)

Sea Coastal Protection Area to together establish the Yellow and Bohai Sea Coastal Wetlands Conservation Alliance, which represents better implementation of the series of important indications and instructions concerning the coastal wetland of the Party and state leaders, and realization of cross-regional experience sharing on wetland conservation and management. Moreover, Yancheng is gradually becoming the pioneer and example of Chinese coastal wetland conservation.

(III). The Yancheng Coastal Wetlands Research Institute is built in line with international standards. On the Symposium, 9 prestigious experts and scholars worldwide including Nicolay Crockford, Chief Policy Officer of Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) have been invited to serve as distinguished research fellows of Yancheng Coastal Wetlands Research Institute to have profound discussions on the development and orientation of the research institute, which have paved the way for Yancheng to foster its scientific prowess of wetland conservation and management.

(IV). Yancheng is gradually becoming the focus and model of world wetlands conservation and development. In the overall context that the international community has paid increasing attention to the wetland conservation, and China has valued the

ecological civilization construction, Yancheng has initiatively demonstrated its exploration and practice on wetland conservation, gaining high affirmation from the international community. The *Yancheng Initiative* drafted and released by foreign expert team has highly praised the administration mode of Yancheng in wetland conservation and development. Representing the largest intertidal zone and typical coastal wetland of eastern coast of China, as well as the essential stopover site along the migration route of East Asian-Australasian migrant birds, the coastal wetlands of Yellow (Bohai) Sea Yancheng are gradually becoming the focuses and models of world wetlands conservation and development.

(V). The Symposium makes use of the crucial and unique ecological resources and value of Yancheng to further build the national sustainable development pilot zone. Mirroring the administrative measures and experience of advanced conservation areas at home and abroad to vigorously construct Yancheng Special Zone (Pilot Zone) of Ecological Protection marks an effective method of Jiangsu Province in exploring ecological priority and green development, and also the positive contribution to national ecological civilization construction and protection of world heritage site. During the Symposium, Yancheng Coastal Wetlands Research



Institute, EFG, and World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF) (Switzerland) Beijing Office have signed the Memorandum of Cooperation on the construction and administration of Yancheng Special Zone (Pilot Zone) of Ecological Protection based on thorough communication, exchange and cooperation.

IV. Future Work Plan

At the opening and closing ceremonies of the Symposium, Secretary Yuan DAI and Mayor Lubao CAO delivered speeches respectively to express the determination and confidence of the CPC Yancheng Municipal Committee and the Yancheng Municipal People's Government to strengthen wetland conservation. Conducting the conservation of coastal wetlands in Yancheng and the participation of sustainable development is not only a practical action of performing international convention and conserving biological diversity, but also the contribution made by Yancheng to worldwide wetlands conservation. Based on the content of *2017 Yancheng Initiative* and *2018 Yancheng Initiative* as well as the suggestions given by domestic and foreign experts, the work direction in the future has been clarified as follows:

- (I) Establishing an institutionalized international conference

platform, providing services from the application for world heritage to the management and sustainable utilization of coastal wetland heritage brands.

The symposiums held in 2017 and 2018 have achieved good results and initially formed an international brand with wide range of influence. Numerous international experts and scholars have repeatedly indicated that they are looking forward to meeting each other in Yancheng in 2019 to discuss the conservation of rare species and coastal wetlands. Therefore, the institutionalized operation of International Symposium on the Coastal Wetlands of Yellow (Bohai) Sea Yancheng is an important foundation to build the Symposium into an international brand.

The Symposium in 2019 can be closely integrated with the activities of International Bird Watching Festival and is expected to make new breakthroughs in the level of guests, the form and content of the Symposium and service assurance level. In consideration of the golden season for bird migration in Yancheng, it is suggested to hold the 3rd International Symposium on the Coastal Wetlands of Yellow (Bohai) Sea Yancheng in the middle of September in 2019. The Yancheng International Bird Watching Festival will be held with joint efforts by well-known international organizations like BirdLife

International and Royal Society for the Protection of Birds before the Symposium, so as to attract more experts and representatives of international organizations engaged in bird and wetland conservation to attend the Symposium in 2019.

The establishment of institutionalized international conference platform also enables Yancheng to gain the support of relevant national ministries and commissions, the CPC Jiangsu Provincial Committee and the Jiangsu Provincial People’s Government, ensuring the professional and international planning of the Symposium as well as its effective implementation. After the application for listing coastal wetlands of Yellow (Bohai) Sea as the world heritage achieving a complete success, it is required to take full advantage of the world heritage brand under the new development background and opportunities, and boost the world heritage management in Yancheng to “switch tracks and increase speed”.

(II) Developing core business capability integrating the Symposium, alliance and pilot site with the construction of research institute as the core.

After two years of preparation, Yancheng Coastal Wetlands Research

Institute has set up a world-class international expert consultant team, laying a solid foundation for building itself into a coastal wetlands research institute reaching international standards. The 2018 International Symposium on the Coastal Wetlands of Yellow (Bohai) Sea Yancheng has clarified the direction for developing core business capability of Yancheng Coastal Wetlands Research Institute, including i. Taking distinguished research fellows of Yancheng Coastal Wetlands Research Institute as the core to make ecological experts play a consulting role and improve the content planning mechanism of the Symposium; ii. Actively conducting experiment and practice and exploring the construction of Yancheng Special Zone (Pilot Zone) of Ecological Protection; iii. Conducting pragmatic exchange and cooperation to give full play to the role and value of Yellow and Bohai Sea Coastal Wetlands Conservation Alliance, and expand the influence of Yancheng Coastal Wetlands Research Institute.

The construction of Yancheng Special Zone (Pilot Zone) of Ecological Protection is suggested to be implemented as follows: i. Giving support to the construction of Yancheng Special Zone (Pilot Zone) of Ecological Protection in aspects of experience and technology by referring international advanced concepts and the

mode of Mai Po Nature Reserve and mobilizing all forces, creating a best practice example in which social organizations have engaged in the management of nature reserve; ii. Carrying out specific research and practice on Yancheng Special Zone (Pilot Zone) of Ecological Protection in such aspects as ecological restoration, ecological tourism and ecological agriculture; iii. Facilitating the building of publicity & education platform of Yancheng Special Zone (Pilot Zone) of Ecological Protection to expand social service function and influence and enhance the sense of participation and identity of the public, so as to build the Zone into one for national wetlands conservation.

The Yellow and Bohai Sea Coastal Wetlands Conservation Alliance will adhere to the purpose of “Making Joint Efforts to Promote the Application of Listing the Coastal Wetlands of Yellow (Bohai) Sea as the World Natural Heritage, Strengthening Long-term Comprehensive Protection and Effective Management of Coastal Wetlands, and Promoting Wetland Biodiversity and Human Well-being”. It will also set goals to promote the application for listing coastal wetlands of Yellow (Bohai) Sea as the World Natural Heritage, establish mechanism for coastal wetlands conservation of Yellow (Bohai) Sea across regions, institutions and countries, boost

the technology exchange between conservation areas and promote technological innovation in coastal wetland conservation. Taking the establishment of Yellow and Bohai Sea Coastal Wetlands Conservation Alliance as an opportunity, it will take actions to communicate and engage with competent authorities and departments of relevant conservation areas and conduct close cooperation, so as to give full play to the role and value of the Alliance.

As the construction of “four beams and eight columns” has been completed, Yancheng Coastal Wetlands Research Institute will make full use of Yancheng’s unique ecological resources and their important position in the world to build Yancheng into a global bird migration passage research center, a coastal change research center, a national biodiversity scientific research base, an international platform for learning and communication of coastal wetlands science and management, and a support center for application research, data sharing and policy protection.

Annex: Yangcheng Statement



ANNEX:

Yangcheng Statement

(17th November, 2018)

Honorable President Zhang, IUCN president, Yuan DAI, Party Secretary of CPC Yancheng Municipal Party Committee , Lubao CAO, Acting Mayor of Yancheng Municipal People's Government, dear delegates from People's Republic of China, dear international participants.

It is now time to start the closing ceremony for the 2018 Yancheng International Symposium on the Coastal Wetlands of Yellow (Bohai) Sea, Yancheng. This meeting was organised under the leadership of Yancheng municipality with the support of IUCN, EFG and RRC-EA.

This event was also organised under the umbrella of the critically important resolution 26 of IUCN WCC Hawaii on *Conservation of intertidal habitats and migratory waterbirds of the West/Yellow Sea, in a global context* encouraging urgent action to conserve those special ecosystems.

First of all, participants acknowledge that significant progresses have been made since the last Yancheng workshop.

Those achievements include:

1. the submission in January 2018 of the Phase 1 (Yancheng) of Yellow Sea WH nomination within 12 months of listing;
2. the recent State Council circular which may well be the strongest national commitment to coastal wetland conservation that the world has ever known;
3. the governments of China, North Korea and South Korea agreed to establish a Working Group for the Conservation of the Yellow/West Sea Intertidal & associated coastal Wetlands. This group, initiated last year in Yancheng met for the first time in Shanghai in July to agree on the terms of reference;

In addition, neighbouring countries contributed to this positive context;

1. It is for example a pleasure to hear that RoK is ready to submit its Phase 1 nomination in the New Year;
2. DPRK, in the last few months has joined Ramsar and EAAFP so that now all 3 Yellow Sea Countries have made the same key international commitments to biodiversity and wetlands conservation;

This year, an equally impressive list of achievements and initiatives was accomplished during the only 2 days of this symposium:

1. an agreement on a China coastal wetlands conservation alliance was made, to coordinate the efforts of all sites in the serial World Heritage nomination (and potentially beyond, including in the other Yellow Sea countries) to complete nomination and implement effective management plans;
2. The guarantee of inclusion of Tiaozini in phase 1 of the proposed World Heritage nomination was announced, ensuring the conservation of what is the most important site for Spoon-billed Sandpiper in the world;
3. A number of Memorandums of Understanding between the Yancheng wetlands institute and International organisations were signed along with the development of a comprehensive list of proposals and ideas to conduct relevant research so the institute can act as research hub for the Yellow Sea;

But despite all this extremely encouraging news, there is still a lot of work that need to be done on the Yellow Sea coast to turn initiatives and ideas into action, if the threatened birds are to have a chance to recover and if the coastal ecosystem services are to be of maximal benefit to people, not only in coastal communities but more widely as well.

Solutions cannot be found at any one level – there needs to be action from

site, to province, to national to regional to global levels, involving not only government but businesses, citizens and other stakeholders. And there are of course lessons to be learnt from other parts of the world which have also had to face balancing economic development with ecological needs.

During the symposium, participants gathered, and brainstormed to issue a list of key recommendations for Yancheng, the Chinese government and international participants to take forward and implement in the next year.

Those recommendations are as follow:

Recommendation 1- Further develop the management plan for the Yancheng, Dongsha and Tiaozini ecosystem and ensure that it becomes a demonstration site exemplary to other national, Yellow Sea, and global sites;

Recommendation 2 - Operationalise the Yancheng Institute, with a local to global remit, to ensure management of Yancheng and other coastal sites is undertaken with proper evidence-based monitoring of what works, including leading to a national/Yellow Sea *Spartina* eradication programme, assessing the potential impact of wind turbines on birds

population and developing guidance on management of ‘working coastal wetlands’ including shellfisheries, saltpans, aquaculture and rice paddies, for birds and people;

Recommendation 3 - Develop a Sustainable Development Plan for Yancheng that can act as a model for elsewhere on the China coast including the accreditation of Yancheng as a wetlands city, sustainable Working Coastal Wetlands and an eco-tourism trail around the Yellow Sea coast;

Recommendation 4 - Develop Yancheng and China as global leaders in coastal wetland conservation including by i) contributing to flyway conservation and the UNESCO Marine World Heritage programme; ii) triggering dialogues with ROK on the coordinated management of proposed WH sites; iii) playing a leading role in establishment of the proposed CBD/Ramsar/CMS Global ‘Caring for Coasts’ Forum and iv) support and lead site twinning initiatives with neighbouring countries;

Recommendation 5 – Further engage in international events and showcase Yellow Sea coastal wetland conservation success at the EAAFP MOP in December 2018; the second meeting of the Yellow Sea Transboundary Working Group in early 2019; the World Conservation

Congress in June 2020 and the Convention for Biological Diversity COP15 in Beijing in October 2020;

Recommendation 6 – Develop, implement and/or strengthen awareness and outreach programmes at local, national and international levels, emphasizing the importance of the Yellow Sea intertidal wetlands and associated ecosystem services, with a particular focus on policy makers and developers at local, provincial and national levels, using existing Communication, Education, Participation and Awareness (CEPA) programmes.

Recommendation 7 – Explore the better integration of Yancheng wetlands and other coastal wetlands in National and Global Blue carbon strategies and identify the contribution of those ecosystems in terms of resilience and mitigation to climate change at local, national and global levels including, but not limited to, their contribution to the National Determined Contributions under the Paris agreement.