

Press statement on ecology from the EcoSummit 2007 (released Saturday 2007-05-26)

Beijing Ecological Declaration

(Adopted at the 3rd Eco-Summit, Beijing, May 26, 2007)

A WORLD ROLE FOR ECOLOGY: the key to life

In Beijing 1400 leading environmental scientists from 70 countries met at EcoSummit 2007. They discussed how ecology can help mitigate global climate change, ecosystem degradation, and to find ways to improve human well-being in the context of the UN Millennium Development Goals. They sought ways of sharing their ecological knowledge with the world's peoples and decision makers.

Ecology is at the heart of many of our everyday concerns. It is the key to solving many problems of human interactions with natural systems. Ecology can help us design, plan, manage and protect our environment to ensure that we can all enjoy healthier lives and pass on a good environment for our grandchildren to appreciate.

Ecology must be a factor in policy decision making. Without understanding ecology, we risk building up problems for the future, from increasing the rate of land degradation and the loss of plant and animal life, to worsening the present global climate change.

The future of our health depends on the delicate balance between the quality of air, water and soil and between microbes, plants and animals. Ecology enables us to understand how this balance works, what disturbs it, and how contaminants are held and released by natural systems.

Pollution threatens our food chains, reduces life in rivers and seas, and can disrupt reproductive systems of fish, animals and humans. Ecology reveals where pollutants go, how they affect different life forms, where they build up and what can be done to prevent their harmful effects.

Our food supplies depend on intensive farming systems and high inputs of fertilisers and pesticides. Ecology holds the key to discovering how to reduce fertiliser use, avoid the side-effects of pesticides and the use of natural controls of diseases and pests that affect crops and animal production.

Global climate change is being caused by the release of greenhouse gases, many of which come from human use of the land, from farming and forestry practices. Ecology has identified the key processes by which natural systems can hold gases and release them to the atmosphere and what would happen to those processes when the world gets warmer.

The impacts of the Indian Ocean Tsunami were far less severe in areas where the shoreline was protected by mangroves. Ecological engineering such as restoring mangrove forests can greatly reduce our vulnerability to disasters. The planting of salt grass marshes in the 1930s has enabled the Chinese to reclaim and protect large segments of their coast.

The scientists at the EcoSummit have called for human society to work together to prevent the further ecological deterioration of the Earth. This demands developing and enforcing environmental laws and regulations, and upholding and applying international conventions. It also requires the widest collaboration between civil society, government, and scientists in applying ecology to everyday life.

Our future is in our hands. Ecology is one of the tools we must use in our efforts to make this a better world.

For further information contact Larry Li(USA):bai-lian.li@ucr.edu or Rusong Wang(China):wangrs@rcees.ac.cn