

Minister hails China as future eco-leader

By WANG DANNA

Cooperation on climate change, environmental protection and energy saving initiatives has long underpinned the on-going dialogue between China and Norway and has become the bedrock of their bilateral relations. In an exclusive interview with China Daily, Norway's Minister of Development and Environment, Erik Solheim, a frequent visitor to China, lays bare the unique relationship between these two very different countries.

In accordance with the Norwegian Action Plan For the Environment and Development Cooperation, the two countries have recently intensified their joint efforts in the environment, energy and climate change sectors.

On September 18, 2006, the two countries signed an agreement to work together on a project related to the environmentally sound management of hazardous and industrial wastes in cement kilns throughout China. This three-year project is now coming to an end and has successfully boosted the technological development of resources for the disposal of the hazardous and industrial waste co-processed in cement kilns across the country.

During a one-day visit to China, the minister took a guided tour of the Beijing Jinyu Mangrove Environmental Protection Technology Co Ltd, one of the largest professional industrial waste disposal plants in China. It is also one of the pilot plants chosen to provide firsthand information for refining the relevant technologies.

When asked why the plant was the first stop on his itinerary, the minister said: "The plant is an excellent example of Sino-Norwegian cooperation. It is an impressive example of



Norway's Minister of Development and Environment, Erik Solheim (middle), pays a guided tour of the Beijing Jinyu Mangrove Environmental Protection Technology Co Ltd during a recent fact-finding mission to the company's facilities.

Wang Danna

how much can be achieved in terms of introducing environmentally friendly technology to the cement industry."

At present, the whole world is united in a global bid to reduce energy consumption and CO₂ emission. In light of this, the Norwegian minister believes co-operation between the two countries represents a "very positive win-win situation." He said: "I very much hope that this plant will set an example to others in the Chinese cement industry".

Commenting on the significance of the project, Solheim said: "If these technologies are

introduced to more and more factories, not only in China but throughout the world, this will enormously reduce overall emissions and particularly those emanating from the cement industry.

"I believe that technological change is the most important solution to climate change. China is now on the way to still greater economic development and I hope that it will happen in an environmentally friendly way. China is at a crossroads and is opting to become more eco-friendly and to support low carbon growth. In a few years time, I believe China will be a

leader in many environmentally friendly technological fields."

Despite the minister's belief that increased international trade and global economic development accelerates climate change, he maintains that shouldn't hamper future growth. He said: "We shouldn't be slowing down international trade whilst there are still so many people living below the poverty line across the world."

Rather than abandoning growth initiatives, the minister believes that countries should embrace ecologically-sound

development regimes and seek new technologies that reduce both energy consumption and emission levels.

He said: "Cooperation on climate change and environmental protection should not just be at a government level. Everyone should be responsible for the environment. Everybody needs to be aware of their own responsibility." More and more people agree that this is especially important in China, a country with population of over 1.3 billion.

Solheim cites the example of his own country, where people are now expected to recycle

household waste on daily basis and where the government actively encourages people to use public transport rather than cars. In the near future, according to the minister, Norway's roads will also welcome a new generation of mass production, environmentally-friendly electric cars.

He believes the people of Norway and China are united in their strong desire to take care of the environment. He said: "People now understand every generation is duty bound to hand over the planet to the next generation in the same or better state as when they took responsibility for it. No generation has the right to destroy the planet for the next generation."

The efforts to secure an ecologically-sound planet are not restricted to just governments or individuals. Solheim said: "There are two ways to protect the environment. Governments should take the lead position, but pressure groups and environmental organizations should continuously remind politicians of their responsibilities regarding this issue.

"It is the same in China as in the world over. People in Beijing are very concerned about pollution. This will put pressure on politicians to react to the current situation. More and more people in China are now campaigning for a low-carbon life-style and a low-carbon economy. This will result in greater efforts being made to meet this citizen-set agenda.

"The Chinese government announced recently that it had set a target of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by 2020, relative to economic development. This will see it aim to reduce the carbon intensity by 40 to 45 percent, compared to that of 2005. This is a very positive measure and very encouraging for the future."

Ambassador welcomes cooperation with China

Dear Reader,

China has had an impressive industrial, economic and social development over the past 30 years. However, this economic development has come at a cost. Huge increases in the emissions of greenhouse gases and pollution in the air, water and land are all having a serious impact on the health and well-being of its people and on its ecosystems. These environmental challenges have now been fully recognized by the Chinese leadership and many steps are being taken to address them.

Norway and China have a mutual interest in combating deteriorating environments and have cooperated on environmental issues for more than a decade. Last year, the collaboration was strengthened when Norway and China signed a bilateral Framework Agreement on Climate Change Cooperation and Dialogue and revised their Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Cooperation. These MoUs provide the main platform for our future collaboration on environmental issues.

Norway supports many projects that contribute to China's implementation of global environmental conventions. These projects draw on highly skilled Chinese and Norwegian partners with core competences in the areas singled out for collaboration. Our main goal is to strengthen environmental management at all levels. The countries respective Ministries of Environmental Protection collaborate closely



Svein O. Sæther

in the selection and follow up of the areas designated for co-operation, including several concrete projects.

Norway attaches great importance to the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED) and is one of its key financial supporters. Through Chinese and international high-level participation, the CCICED undertakes major environmental studies and delivers its findings directly to the Chinese government. This makes it a unique mechanism. Norway is pleased to have so many of its experts involved with the CCICED and is particularly proud that its former minister for the environment holds the post of vice-chair.

As the largest producer of coal in the world and the largest emitter of greenhouse gases, China has an important role to play in reducing the emission of climate-damaging gases. The country has set itself

ambitious national targets on energy efficiency and renewable energy and its participation as a responsible international player at the Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen is encouraging. We need China's support in setting a far-seeing goal for reducing global greenhouse gas emissions.

In retrospect, 2009 has been an important year for China. Its fiscal stimulus package, presented as a response to the economic crisis, has provided opportunities to initiate a move towards a low-carbon and green economy. China's need for a new development path is not only a challenge, but also represents an opportunity for innovation and a highly needed restructure of its industrial base.

2009 was also very important year for Sino-Norwegian relations. We celebrated 55 years of diplomatic relations this year, relations that are excellent and dynamic in a number of areas, ranging from the environment, energy, and trade to cultural exchanges, research collaboration, education and tourism.

It is my hope that the relations between China and Norway will continue to deepen in the years to come. Norway looks forward to enhance collaboration with China in the environmental, energy and other sectors to address common opportunities and challenges.

Svein O. Sæther
The Norwegian Ambassador to China

China-Norway eco-partnering set to deepen in the future

Editor's note: China and Norway have made considerable progress in nurturing joint environmental protection initiatives between the two countries. Nina Rør, the environmental counselor for the Norwegian embassy in Beijing, spoke to China Daily about the issues that unite the two nations.

Q: How would you describe the current status of Sino-Norwegian cooperation on environmental protection? How do you expect bilateral relations in this area to develop in the future?

Nina: Norway and China have had constructive and fruitful cooperation for almost 14 years. This cooperation has been useful for both parties and has resulted in a common understanding and a strengthened capacity for meeting important environmental challenges.

China is an important country with regard to the environment and climate change. China's efforts to address serious climate change and environmental problems are impressive, however, there is still some way to go. Norway looks forward to continued collaboration with China on these issues.

Q: What are the challenges and opportunities for the two countries in expanding and deepening further cooperation with regard to climate change and environmental problems?

Nina: Norway and China signed a revised Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Cooperation last year. A new mechanism was then established. Annual meetings are now held at director general level. This structure will be used to discuss policy areas of common interest, issues on the international agenda and to give policy guidance for further environmental cooperation between our two countries.

In this way we hope to strengthen coordination between project cooperation at a local level and meeting en-

vironmental challenges at an international level. The first annual meeting was held in Norway in April. This included a field trip to Svalbard, where the delegation from the Ministry of Environmental Protection saw firsthand the impact of climate change on Svalbard and how long-term pollution has affected the area.

Q: How can China and Norway work together to make sure the two sides are a global model for close cooperation? What lessons can we learn from the past in this regard?

Nina: Sino-Norwegian cooperation is very much based on project cooperation, with technical experts from both sides working together to address specific issues, such as mercury contamination, persistent organic pollutants and pollution control. Competence building and capacity building are the keywords here. We believe this is a very fruitful way to cooperate.



Nina Rør

Q: What is your view on the Sino-Norwegian project for the environmentally sound management of hazardous and industrial wastes in cement kilns in China? What is your expectation of the outcome of this project? What do you think the project will bring to the two countries and enterprises involved?

Nina: The cement kiln project is a win-win project with huge potential. China struggles with rising amounts

of waste and hundreds of incinerators are now at the planning stage. This causes considerable worry among local residents. Hazardous waste is harmful both to the environment and to people's health. China has become the largest emitter of CO₂ gases and cement production is responsible for almost 20 percent of China's total emissions. By using hazardous waste in the production of cement, the need for both coal and raw materials will be reduced. The advantage is an increased capacity for waste and hazardous waste treatment, improved energy and resource efficiency, as well as a significant reduction of greenhouse gas emissions due to the reduced consumption of fossil fuels and limestone.

Q: What other projects regarding climate change and environmental protection are on the agenda for future joint initiatives?

Nina: Norway supports a number of projects that contribute to China's implementation of global environmental conventions. These involve Norwegian and Chinese partners mainly in the area of environmental management. Examples of ongoing projects include improving environmental planning effectiveness in five-year plans, strengthening the ability of provincial environmental decision-makers to reduce mercury pollution and persistent organic pollutants, developing provincial strategies for climate change and using hazardous waste in cement kilns in order to replace coal and securing the environmental sound management of hazardous waste.

Also in the pipeline are two projects related to climate change, one on co-control strategies for reducing both greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution and another in the interface between climate change and biodiversity. Ecosystems play a crucial role both in adapting strategies for climate change and in mitigation efforts, such as afforestation.

Highlights of the first meeting between environment ministers in Oslo in April

The following is a summary of the first annual meeting between the environment ministers of China and Norway in Oslo on April 23, 2009.

■ The first Coordinators Meeting under the Memorandum of Understanding on Environmental Cooperation between the Ministry of the Environment of Norway (MOE) and the Ministry of Environment Protection of the People's Republic of China (MEP) was held in Oslo 23 April 2009.

■ The first Coordinators meeting was the result of a revised MoU, where it was agreed to establish annual meetings between coordinators at DG level.

■ Prior to the meeting, a study-trip to Svalbard was arranged, with the aim of seeing and learning more about how climate change and long range pollutants affect the Arctic region.

■ The participants at the meeting in Oslo noted the constructive and good cooperation between Norway and China over almost 14 years.

The cooperation has been useful for both parties and has resulted in a common understanding and strengthened capacity for dealing with important environmental challenges.

It was stated that annual meetings could be used to discuss policy areas of common interests, issues on the international agenda and to give policy guidance for further environmental cooperation between the two countries.

■ Major items on the agenda were:

Exchange of views on status and challenges in international Conventions and Negotiations especially with regard to negotiations on biodiversity (including the interlinkage between biodiversity and climate change), persistent organic pollutants and mercury. The UNEP decision on launching negotiations on mercury was addressed.

Other areas for discussion were Air Pollution and Climate Change, China Council (CCICED) and Trade and Environment.

■ Guidance on areas for future bilateral cooperation:

It was agreed that areas of cooperation within air and water pollution and chemical management should continue having a high priority.

In addition, coordinated policies on air pollution and climate change, the interlinkage between biodiversity and climate change and trade and environment were identified as areas of priority for further work. Environmental capacity building in the western part of China was raised as an important area for focus.

The work of the China Council was appreciated. Low Carbon Economy was especially addressed and the possibility for bilateral cooperation within this area was raised.

MEP and MoE agreed also to arrange a bilateral workshop in China about POPs and to consider the possible secondment of a Chinese expert to the Norwegian Polar Institute.

Both parties agreed to have closer contacts at expert level between Norway and China in negotiations on POPs and Mercury and biodiversity.