

**Opening remarks for The Third Symposium on
"The Impact of Climatic Change on Agricultural Production
in the Pacific Rim"**

**Shu Geng
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Mr. Chairman, Honorable Secretary Liu, Honorable Chairman Sun, General Director Tsay, Ladies and Gentlemen, Colleagues and Friends:

It is truly with great pleasure and honor that I can stand here on this podium on behalf of the foreign colleagues to express our sincere appreciation to our hosts. Personally, I feel inspired when I see so many distinguished guests and old friends here today. I have complete confidence that we will have an extremely productive and informative conference for today and for the days to follow.

Climate is the key that defines and shapes natural and environmental systems which regulate all physical and biological phenomena on earth. With ever-increasing population and resource exploitation, humans have intentionally or unintentionally disturbed the underlying mechanisms on which natural systems operate. Evidence is mounting that the world is entering a new and unique period of climatic and environmental change with profound implications for life on earth. What is not clear is the magnitude of the environmental and climatic change and the degree of their impacts on earth's life-support systems.

Those of us who come from California can readily testify to the horror of the drought on agriculture. Until recently, California has been blessed with "good weather and abundant production". The unprecedented 6 year long drought between 1986-1992 has shaken our confidence in technology and once again we yield to the inscrutable power of nature. This experience has challenged Californian's values on water as a resource and fundamentally changed California's politics on water allocations. The question of the appropriate amount of water used for agriculture, and by urban dwellers and wildlife has been hotly debated, even among children in elementary schools. This phenomenon is by no means unique for California. Droughts and floods are occurring with greater frequency and extremity all over the world, more than at any other time in recent history.

How intensive and extensive should agricultural systems be? How much of our natural resources should we consume for development? How much has human activity damaged the environment, including the climatic and ecological systems? What can we do in developing civilization without deteriorating the environment or

depleting the natural resources? How can we prevent the build-up of greenhouse gases that may lead to potential weather catastrophes?

Scientists and policy makers know the complexity of the questions but know little about the answers. Thus, there lies new challenges and opportunities for researchers to acquire information and for political leaders to develop and implement strategies to improve the environment.

The opportunity is great, as is also the task to solve the problems. Not only must the physical, biological, social and economical scientists work jointly as multi-disciplinary research teams, but scientists and policy makers must work closely so that policies on human activities can be developed with sound implications to the environment.

Furthermore, the effect of human activities on the environment and the impact of the changed environment on human lives have no political or geographical boundaries. It doesn't matter whose fault it is in ruining the environment. When nature assaults, we all suffer.

There will be no effective means to deal with environmental issues without the cooperation and collaboration among nations. This conference today represents a recognition of such a demand.

Taiwan has made "miracles" in economic developments in recent years. There is much to be said and learned about the economic and political accomplishments of Taiwan. I am, however, most impressed by Taiwan's positive involvements in international affairs. Taiwan in many ways is uniquely qualified to address common concerns of countries in the Pacific Rim, particularly strong in areas of economics, and sciences and technology. The meeting today illustrates the leadership role that Taiwan is increasingly undertaking and the contributions that Taiwan is making in addressing concerns of a global nature.

Many people have worked hard to bring about this conference. The financial support from the Department of Transportation, and The State Council of Agriculture, as they are respectively represented by the honorable Secretary Dr. Liu and Council Chairman Dr. Sun, are appreciated.

The Central Weather Bureau, its able Director-General Tsay, Director Lee Ben-Chun, Ms. Chang Yu-Fang and others, who are sponsoring and hosting this conference are especially thanked. There is no doubt that they will, as I have experienced before, give us a new understanding of the true meaning of generosity

and hospitality. Of course we are all indebted to Dr. Yang Chea-yuan. Without his initiative and persistence, we would not be here today.

In conclusion, I am aware that we come from different parts and countries of the Pacific Rim, with differences in culture, language and beliefs. At the same time, I am amazed how much we do share in common. We share a vision and a goal to make this world a better place for us to live, environmentally, economically, and culturally. The success depends on an understanding of the intricacy and necessity of mutual-dependency. Let me quote Robert Bellah who provided an explanation of the necessity of interdependency:

"How can we give interdependence a moral meaning? We don't like the fact that we depend on a lot of other people, or that what people do in other parts of the world can have effects on our lives. We need to develop common ways of thinking that could take the fear out of that interdependence, and that would operate to make this planet more habitable to all people."

This conference, I believe has helped us to move a step forward toward such an understanding.