

## [CN] Enfu Cheng

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## **Opening Remarks on the Third Forum of the World Association for Political Economy (WAPE)**

**[CN] Enfu Cheng**

Ladies and Gentlemen, Comrades:

Good morning!

Today we meet again in the beautiful town of Langfang, to discuss global and national sustainable development issues, following the first successful WAPE forum, held in April 2006 in Shanghai with theme of " *Economic Globalization and Modern Marxian Economics* " and the second WAPE forum, successfully held in October 2007 in the University of Shimane, Japan to probe into the theme "*The Political Economy of the Contemporary Relationship between Labor and Capital in the World*". On behalf of the World Association for Political Economy and Marxism Research Sector of Chinese Academy of Social Sciences, I would like to express my warm welcome to all scholars attending today from all over the world and express my sincere thanks to leaders present from Tsinghua University and Chinese Academy of Social Sciences.

The theme of this forum is " *Marxism and Sustainable Development*", focused on the following topics:

1.The population problem in different countries and on a global scale, its causes and countermeasures.

2.The resource problem in different countries and on a global scale, its causes and countermeasures.

3.The environmental and ecological problem in different countries and on a global scale, its causes and countermeasures.

4.The inter-relationship between population, resources and environment and its modeling analysis.

5.The development and innovation of basic economic theories on population, resources and environment.

6.The sustainable development view of modern Marxian political economy.

7.Review of Marxist ecological theories.

8.Other relevant economic and social issues

These are important issues not only of academic value, but also of a pragmatic and

practical significance. I believe, with your active participation, the forum will also fulfill great achievements in theory and policy.

With increasing globalization of the current world economy, issues of population, resources and environment have become a global common problems and mankind is facing a crisis of sustainable development. In today's serious polarization of wealth possession and income distribution, the population living in extreme poverty continues to rise in the world except China, the global population of unemployment is keeping high, per capita working hours of the labour is reducing, and even worse; energy and rare mineral resources are constantly exhausted, arable land continues to decrease, groundwater is still depleting, primeval forests, grasslands, wetlands and marine coral reefs are continually under destruction, biological diversity continues to decrease ; toxic gas also keeps emitting into the air, toxic chemicals are constantly polluting rivers, lakes and seas, the increase of carbon dioxide emissions continues to deplete the ozone layer.

Modern industrial methods of production in the world whose goal is to pursue profits continue to explore new areas of investment and expand production scale, to deplete renewable and non-renewable resources at a faster speed, and to emit a considerable amount of harmful substances into the nature; the modern life and consumption patterns of mankind to pursue pleasure and utilitarian fashion are constantly tapping the consumers' potential spending and stimulating the consumption desire, regardless of the abandonment of a large-scale garbage into the nature. Resource consumption and environmental pollution by modern industry and human has exceeded the nature's own capacity of absorption, compensation, renewable and recovery capabilities, which leads not only to the global crisis of the ecological environment, but also to the survival of mankind itself at stake.

The human has to consider the relationship between population, resources, environment and development; the human has to reflect the unsustainable development mode to seek economic growth by sacrifice of ecology, to seek capital appreciation by sacrifice of workers, to seek one's own welfare by sacrifice of others', to seek local development by sacrifice of the overall, to seek immediate interests by sacrifice of long-term's, to seek material possession by sacrifice of the spirit, to seek enjoyment of current generation by sacrifice of the future generations; the human has to dig out the deep roots at which the contemporary people took the socio-economic road of unsustainable development ; the human has to explore the road, the mode and prospects of sustainable human development.

Marx pointed out dialectically that the relationship between the human and the nature , who holds that the human is the product of the nature and the nature is the basis of human's survival and development, who believes that the link of the human's material and spiritual life with the natural world, is no more than the link between the nature and its own, because the human is part of the nature, which accordingly is the inorganic body of the human and

the human body with a sustained constant interaction with the nature in order to avoid perdition.

Marxism revealed profoundly that the capitalist social and economic development is not sustainable and the capitalism private ownership and capital accumulation rule will inevitably trigger the man's inequality, unbalanced, one-sided development, which results in man's alienation and disaster of the relationship between man and the nature. Marx pointed out that the capitalist society with private ownership had showed enormous social and historical progress compared with the past, who praised that the bourgeoisie had created much more wealth in its less than 100 years of rule than all generations in the past had done. However, he also pointed out that the capital accumulation and production, established on the basis of the capitalist private ownership system, would be restrained by capitalist possession of wealth and polarization of income distribution and shortage of effective consumption for the working class, the capitalist social and economic development will inevitably be interrupted constantly by the periodical economic crisis. The rule of capital movement forces capitalists to realize savings of constant capital at the expense of health and leisure of the labour, by means of worsening the working conditions and living conditions of workers and forces capitalists to achieve the savings of variable capital and profit maximization at the cost of damage to the environment. Therefore, the capitalist private ownership system is the cause of the social and ecological crisis in the past and in today's world.

Marx pointed out that only the communist society can achieve the unity of humanism and naturalism and the unity of the liberation of the man and the nature, really solve the contradiction between the man and the nature, between the man and itself and accomplish the sustainable development of the human and the harmony between the man and the nature, the man and itself, the man and the society, the society and the nature by means of actively developing the usefulness and discarding the uselessness of capitalist private ownership system, implementing public ownership of the nature and wealth, planning the economy as a whole and undertaking social democratic governance.

Engels also claimed that we rule the nature but never in the same way as conquerors ruling a minority, or as people standing outside the natural world. We, together with our flesh, blood and minds are part of the nature and exist in the nature, our entire rule to the nature must be based on correct understanding and application of the nature laws.

Many Western eco-Marxist scholars pay attention to and study the ecological crisis. William Leiss and Ben Agger, both Canadian scholars, believe that people's excessive consumption and extravagant consumption, i.e. consumer alienation, have caused the plundering of the ecological environment and the over-exploitation of resources and energy and triggered the ecological crisis. British scholar, David Pepper, points out that the capitalist production with the profit-driven nature makes it regard the natural resources only as the object of profit, which will inevitably bring about "negative externalities" and "costs

externalization", impute the cost of disposing environmental pollution to the community, rather than including it in the cost of production. The developed capitalist countries are imputing the ecological crisis and pollution disposal costs to developing countries by means of "eco-colonialism" to ease their domestic ecological crisis and to improve their domestic environment. French scholar, Andre Gorz, holds that the capitalist "economic rationality" and the "production logic" is bound to regard reducing costs more significant than protecting the ecological environment; therefore, the emergence of serious ecological crisis is inevitable, and the only way out to change this situation is to stop economic growth, to change the way of life, to limit consumption and to make use of renewable resources and decentralized technology.

American scholar, Janes O'Connor, claims that there is a double contradiction of capitalism, namely the contradiction between the productive forces of capitalism and the capitalist production relations and the contradiction between productivity and production relations of capitalism and production conditions, interaction of the two conflicts leads to double crises, i.e. economic crisis and ecological crisis. In order to address environmental and ecological problems, people must make exchange value subordinate to utility value, abstract labor subordinate to concrete labor, organize production in accordance with the reasonable needs rather than profit. The future eco-socialism will pursue production justice rather than distribution justice. American scholar, John Bellamy Foster, points out that environmental damage is not due to the technology itself, but to the capitalist application of technology. The capitalist use of updated technology can not solve the problem of the ecological environment, because the root of the ecological environment problem lies in the capitalism system, the solution to this problem need to rely on combination of traditional class power and power of the emerging social movements such as ecological movement, the feminist movement, the peace and justice movement, and other vital forces. American scholar, Herman E. Daly, announces that the growth of economic scale can maintain sustainable development only when the economy does not exceed the carrying capacity of the environment. American scholar, Kenneth E. Boulding, states that taking the road of sustainable development needs to develop recycling economy, namely spacecraft economy. American scholar, Joel Kovel, alleges that solving the ecological crisis of capitalism must free utility value from the capitalist exchange value and free the labor from the capital, and walk towards revolutionary eco-socialism, for such genuine socialism, two conditions must be fulfilled, namely, the public ownership of means of production and free combo of all workers. American scholar, Paul Burkett, points out that Marx's labor value theory and communist ideology shares the intrinsic consistency with ecological values.

Ancient Chinese wisdom contains a number of simple ideas of sustainable development, such as the idea of "Harmony between the nature and the human", the idea of mutual promotion and restraint between the five elements "metal, wood, water, fire and

earth", to which everything in the universe including people are boiled down; the idea of extending life by avoiding actions like "draining the pond to get all the fish" or "killing the goose that lays the golden eggs".

Contemporary Chinese scholars have engaged in the research of sustainable development and made outstanding contributions. Xu Dixin, the late well-known Marxist economist in China Academy of Social Sciences, proposed to study China's eco-economic issues and establish China's eco-economics early in 1980, and initiated China Eco-Economics Institute in 1984, 5 years earlier than the foundation of International Society of Ecological Economics in 1989. He also published the Journal of "Ecological Economy" in China in 1987, two years earlier than issue of " Ecological Economics " by the International Institute of Ecological Economy in 1989. The book "Ecological Economics" at his editor-in-chief in September 1987 is the early works devoted to probing into this field.

Zhang Xunhua, a renowned Marxist economist from Fudan University, is the first to propose compensation for the use of land in the early 1980s. In 1987 he published the book " the Land Economics," in which he concluded that the value of every commodity is not determined by the necessary labor time contained by the commodity itself but by the necessary social labor time needed for its reproduction for the natural resources are not labor product having price but no value. Although the original value of natural resources equals to zero, because of the excessive use of resources, labor has to be put to make them renew, then not only renewable resources would have value, the original natural resources should be valued by the labor consumed in renewable resource.

Liu Sihua, China's well-known Marxist eco-economist, the editor-in-chief of "the Sustainable Development Economics" published in 1997, the first book of the kind, proposed the concept of "ecological capital" firstly, established sustainable development theoretical model that the total social capital is composed of the physical capital, human capital and ecological capital, initiated intrinsic factor theory of eco-environment and coordinating development of ecology and economy(that is, the natural eco-environment as a source of material wealth is intrinsic factor of the production activities of human being), advocated social ecological homo economicus and ecological productivity and built synergies of the fourth civilization, that is, ecological civilization in addition to material civilization, political civilization and spiritual civilization .

The CPC and the Chinese Government attaches great importance to sustainable development, from building a comprehensive well-off society and the establishment of a resource-saving and environment-friendly society, to carrying out the scientific development view, building a socialist harmonious society, which all embody the idea and belief of sustainable development. The report at 17th Congress of Communist Party of China points out that China has to achieve comprehensive, coordinated and sustainable development in accordance with the fundamental interests of the overwhelming majority of

the people, to achieve development for the people, of the people, by the people, to follow the civilized development road featuring the growth of the production, affluent life and sound ecosystem, to coordinate the growth speed with structural quality and efficiency, to coordinate economic growth with population, resources and environment, to make overall planning for urban and rural economic development, regional development, economic and social development, harmonious development between the man and the nature, domestic development and opening to the outside world, to coordinate relationship between the central and local authorities, individual and collective interests, local and the whole interests, current and long-term interests, to achieve the sustainable economic and social development. Chinese people are trying hard to explore the road of sustainable development with Chinese characteristics to fit the national conditions of its own.

In the face of common human issues of sustainable development, as Marxist economists, we advocate that sustainable development should meet contemporary needs for current generation without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs, meet a group, regional or national needs without damaging other groups, regions or countries to meet their demand and develop with harmony between the man and the nature, the man and itself, the man and the society, the society and the nature. To this end, we must address sustainable development issues by solving the problems of poverty, protect and meet the basic needs of all people, provide basic sustainable living condition at large, such as food, health and education to ensure that people do not deplete natural resources for short-term needs; population growth should coordinate with the changing potential productivity provided by the ecological system; China, India and the whole world has to control the total population growth; the utilization of renewable resources must be controlled under the renewable rate; the utilization rate of non-renewable resources should not exceed the development rate of alternative sources of energy; the environmental pollution and ecological damage should not exceed the capacity of purification of the environment and ecology themselves. We advocate achieving sustainable development through the promotion of values and lifestyle.

We believe that the real solution to sustainable human development issues is to place means of production and natural ecosystem under the common control of human society. Privatization and commercialization of the natural environment alone will not help to solve the ecological crisis, but only to aggravate the ecological crisis. Economy without calculating environmental costs and complete commercialization of the nature will be harmful to the conditions of the environment reproduction.

Technological progress can improve the efficient use of resources and the environment, but in a capitalist society, technological advances are used for capital accumulation, the improvement of the efficiency of resource use has always been accompanied by the expansion of economic scale, and finally resources depletion and environmental pollution

will be pricked up. Only with transformation of the capitalist production relations, the establishment of a new society to meet the common, real, comprehensive developmental needs of the human and ecological, social sustainable development as its goal instead of profit-driven, can we really solve ecological environment problems.

It is impossible to accomplish the fundamental change required by global society and ecological sustainable development with the effective promotion by the working people and Marxists all over the world. Therefore, we will play our positive roles through academic research and policy exploration.

Finally, I wish the meeting a complete success! Wish you all good health and happy stay! Thanks!