



## Seminar on the Preparation of a Sustainable COP

### Summary Report

As the 15<sup>th</sup> Conference of the Parties to the Convention of Biological Diversity (CBD COP 15), to be held in Kunming, China approaches, China faces the tremendous challenges and opportunities that arise as host country. One great opportunity China has taken up is to organize the conference with sustainable principles and as carbon neutral as possible. The Seminar on the Preparation of a Sustainable COP, hosted by the Sino-German Environmental Partnership on March 9, 2021, was an opportunity for Chinese and German bilateral exchange on approaches to organizing sustainable events via German experience from the 2017 UNFCCC COP 23. Additionally, the processes which enabled a successful German initiative on mainstreaming biodiversity in the private sector, launched at the CBD COP 9, were shared.

The seminar's participants included:

**Ms. Inka Gnittke**, Head of Division, International Cooperation on Biodiversity and CBD National Focal Point, German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety (BMU)

**Ms. Wang Ying**, Team Leader, Meeting Service and Logistics, COP 15 Preparatory Committee,

**Mr. Chen Jun**, Kunming Focal Point, COP 15 Yunnan Preparatory Office,

**Ms. Annette Schmidt-Räntsch**, Policy Officer, Environment and Economy, Sustainable Corporate Governance, BMU,

**Ms. Kerstin Pettenkofer**, Expert for Sustainable Event Management,  
*and*

**Ms. Veronica Veneziano**, CEO, 'Biodiversity in Good Company' Initiative.

## **Ms. Inka Gnittke's Opening Remarks**

Ms. Gnittke opened the seminar by stressing the goal of the CBD COP 15 in Kunming, China, which is to develop an ambitious Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework that both addresses the key drivers of biodiversity loss around the world and promotes robust implementation mechanisms. In order for such a framework to materialize, it is vital to raise awareness on and encourage commitments to biodiversity conservation among all stakeholders, including the private sector and civil society.

As unsustainable production and consumption is one of the root causes of biodiversity loss, the organization of COP 15 constitutes an important opportunity to implement sustainable event organization methods, even in light of the difficulties that have arisen due to the pandemic. Through the sharing of experiences from both the sustainable organization of the 2017 UNFCCC COP 23 held in Bonn, Germany, and successful outcomes from the 2008 CBD COP 9, also held in Bonn, valuable insights can be gained for the upcoming COP 15 in Kunming.

## **Ms. Wang Ying's Opening Remarks**

Ms. Wang pointed out the long history of Sino-German cooperation in the field of ecology and environmental protection, beginning with the first conference in 2009 and deepening since then.

China is actively making preparations and working with the CBD Secretariat as well as all parties involved, to make good use of the limited amount of time left before COP 15 takes place. While many uncertainties have arisen due to the pandemic, one certainty is that this COP has been and will continue to be organized according to green principles, as was the COP 23 in Germany. In the run-up to the COP, the city of Kunming has already done a substantial amount of work in the green transformation of urban infrastructure, venue retrofitting, and transportation, among other conference logistics. China is also working with the CBD Secretariat to organize parallel events on biodiversity and business, as inspired by the business-biodiversity outcome of COP 9.

Therefore, in these dual aspects, sustainable COP organization and biodiversity-business initiatives, there are ample opportunities for China to learn from Germany's previous experiences.

## **Mr. Chen Jun: Thoughts on the Sustainable Design and Implementation of the CBD COP 15**

Mr. Chen shared the impact of national carbon neutrality goals on CBD COP 15 planning. In September 2020, President Xi Jinping announced that China would peak carbon emissions before 2030 and become carbon neutral by 2060. Complemented by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment's May 2019 notice about carbon neutrality for all major events, the issue of carbon neutrality is therefore a priority for the planning and organization of COP 15.

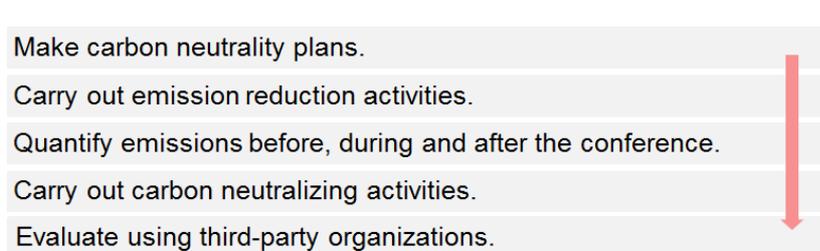


Figure 1: Carbon Neutral COP Work Stream

The Yunnan Preparatory Office follows a five-step work stream to ensure a carbon neutral COP 15, presented in Figure 1 on the left.

Furthermore, a myriad of specific measures either have been or will be taken to ensure a green COP, categorized as

green city development, green transportation, green accommodation, green venues, or green communication. Some examples of activities in each of these five categories are given in the table below:

Green city development	Building ecological wetlands around Kunming’s Dianhu lake; building a 400 km “healthy walkway” around Kunming
Green transportation	Usage of new energy vehicles for shuttle between locations; free access to public transportation to foreign conference participants; bike sharing around venues; Apps and miniprograms to share public transportation timetables
Green accommodation	Recommendation of green/ISO4000 certified hotels; Encourage environmentally-friendly and energy conserving items for hotel facility upgrades; Promote less usage of disposable toiletries; For restaurants, provide local healthy produce, non-disposable cups, degradable packaging, and centrally collected, transported, and sorted kitchen waste.
Green venues	Usage of spray irrigation with reclaimed water for water conservation; maximizing usage of natural light and LED for energy conservation; simple and environmentally-friendly decorations; encourage waste-sorting, refillable water bottles, etc. for participants in venues
Green communication	Utilize digital forms to communicate concept of green COP; train staff on the concept of sustainable development; display local products with international sustainability certifications

Through the successful implementation of these measures toward a sustainable, low carbon event, it is hoped that the COP 15 can serve as a role model for following large-scale events in China.

### **Ms. Annette Schmidt-Räntsch: Experiences from the UNFCCC COP 23 in Bonn**

Ms. Räntsch shared her extensive planning experience from the UNFCCC COP 23, held November 2017 in Bonn, Germany. The conference hosted around 22,000 visitors in total, emitted around 50,000 tons of CO<sub>2</sub> equivalent (of which 43,000 were from travel), consumed 1.45 million kWh of energy (of which 17 % were from renewables), and used 6.6 tons of cardboard and paper. In preparing the COP, many factors were considered, including the aim of the event, the season, number of participants, location, energy sources, accommodation, virtual participation, catering, drinking water management, and waste management.

In deciding which planning factors were priorities for sustainability, the planning committee employed five criteria, presented in Figure 2 on the right.



Figure 2: Criteria for Analysis

By assigning each conference factor with both a priority level and management potential level, the team had an overview of which factors were not only important for COP sustainability, but which they could influence. Factors such as catering, environmental communication, and energy efficiency were both high priority and had high management potential. However, for some high priority elements, such as GHG emissions and accommodation, management ultimately had limited ability to influence outcomes.



Figure 3: EMAS Certificate for UNFCCC COP23

One of the high-priority, high-management potential areas was communication to the public on the environmentally-friendly nature of the event, and consequently, it was a focus for action. Some examples of how this was done included visitor tours of event facilities, newspaper articles, and daily press conferences.

Public transparency and credibility were also considered essential. A Sustainability Team, made up of various stakeholders, convened regularly to both be instructed on the principals of the conference, and to share their own ideas for sustainable organization. In addition, internal and external audits were conducted. The COP 23 was certified according to the Eco-Management and Audit Scheme (EMAS), an internationally accepted environmental management system and the most demanding of its kind. The certificate can be seen in Figure 3 on the left.

### **Ms. Kerstin Pettenkofer: Sustainability Criteria in Event Planning**

Ms. Pettenkofer shared her insights on sustainability in event planning, including specific examples from her work for UNFCCC COP 23 in Bonn. For all sustainable event planning, matching activities with environmental and social issues at the very start of the planning process is vital. In addition, throughout the entire planning process, the idea of sustainability should be disseminated as much as possible and with as many people as possible.

In practice at COP 23, communication with the suppliers started from the tendering process, where potential suppliers were provided information about sustainable events and asked for their support. Not only were trainings held with people on the ground to allow for an understanding of why sustainability initiatives were important, all suppliers and staff were required to sign a code of conduct on sustainability. While the conference was taking place, daily briefings with the staff were held to stay informed and to adjust.

Sustainability encompasses social as well as environmental dimensions, and these social dimensions were also taken into consideration at COP 23. It was a “barrier-free” event in the sense that steps were taken to encourage diverse groups of people to feel comfortable enough to participate in the conference. Suppliers with integrated approaches, such as those that employed disabled persons, were chosen. Fair working conditions to the staff were ensured, food leftovers were distributed to organizations helping people in need, and finally, fair-trade or local products distributed at the event were marked to raise awareness.

### **Ms. Veronica Veneziano: Engaging Business Stakeholders for Biodiversity – ‘Biodiversity in Good Company’ Initiative**



Figure 4: ‘Biodiversity in Good Company’ Initiative Logo

Ms. Veneziano introduced the “Biodiversity in Good Company” Initiative, which was launched at the CBD COP 9 in 2006 by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment and a consortium of private sector actors. The initiative was pioneering, in that it was one of the first which tackled biodiversity as a main topic for the private sector. It has since become a role model for other similar initiatives around the world.

The Initiative is made up of a wide-ranging group of companies, operating in diverse sectors of the economy and of all sizes, but all with the common goal of including biodiversity protection in their sustainability strategies. Member companies sign a commitment to not only put the CBD goals and targets as main components of strategic development, but also commit to publicly report on biodiversity actions every two years. The initiative also provides an arena for dialogue and exchange of expertise.

In dealing with companies' impacts on biodiversity, the Initiative makes the distinction between direct and indirect impacts. *Direct impacts* are generally focused on by companies working in primary sectors, and deal with interventions in nature and ecosystems. This may pertain to companies' physical premises and analyses of biodiversity in their headquarters, production plans, and more. A best practice example is the Audi AG redesign of its entire Münchsmünster premises with a biodiversity approach through actions such as roof greening and habitat design. *Indirect impacts* are focused on by companies working in secondary and tertiary sectors, and deal with supply chain related impacts. Integrating biodiversity in the supply chain can be challenging and requires a multilevel approach, including partnerships with suppliers and producers. An example is the Hebenstreit and Kentrup family business, which offers ecological burial services through actions such as locally sourced stones and flowers.



Figure 5: Audi AG headquarters after biodiversity initiatives

One of the business networks coordinated by the Initiative is the Unternehmen Biologische Vielfalt (UBi), a platform designed for business associations where, together with NGOs and nature conservation organizations, dialogue and information on biodiversity approaches are shared. Conferences, meetings, and an info-pool present current topics on biodiversity and share best practices.

### **Insights from Joint Discussion**

**Ms. Veneziano:** By being part of the 'Biodiversity in Good Company' initiative, companies also benefit through the credibility that the Initiative gives them. In an era where "greenwashing" is common, companies can show their sincerity by being part of a well-established initiative. Therefore, although the initiative is small and does not have a large marketing department, companies proactively approach to join. Currently, there are around 30-35 members. The Initiative also tries to communicate to its members as much as possible the global perspective of the CBD COP, since businesses are often detached from the international perspective.

**Ms. Schmidt-Räntsch:** Emissions calculations started in the preparatory phase of COP 23, from about half a year before the conference took place. Emissions were divided into three scopes. Scope 1 emissions concerned travel and COP-related emissions in Bonn. Scope 2 included electricity and district heating emissions. Scope 3 included indirect emissions as a result of conference-related activities, such as production of products. Emissions were calculated through daily audits and information provided by suppliers, and verified by external auditors.

**Ms. Wang:** Learning from Germany, China is also working towards a plan which mainstreams biodiversity within businesses. Currently, China is working with the CBD Secretariat to organize a business and biodiversity forum. It is hoped that in the process of preparing for COP 15, business and industry can be officially invited to take part in biodiversity protection.

## **About the Sino-German Environmental Partnership Project**

The Sino-German Environmental Partnership project has supported bilateral environmental policy dialogue through the exchange of experience and advice on various specialist topics since 2013. It is overseen by the Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (BMU) of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Ministry of Ecology and Environment (MEE) of the People's Republic of China. The Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) is responsible for implementing the Sino-German Environmental Partnership project, which is funded through the International Climate Initiative (IKI) of BMU.

For more information, contact:

Dr. Christian Stärz (Project Director, Sino-German Environmental Partnership)  
+86 136 6123 2183 | christian.staerz@giz.de | [environmental-partnership.org](http://environmental-partnership.org)

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Header (Page 1): Pettenkofer, Kerstin. "Sustainability Criteria in Event Planning," presented at the Seminar on the Preparation of a Sustainable COP (March 9, 2021).

Figure 3: Schmidt-Räntsch, Annette. "Experiences from the UNFCCC COP23," presented at the Seminar on the Preparation of a Sustainable COP (March 9, 2021).

Figure 4: Veneziano, Veronica. "Engaging Business Stakeholder for Biological Diversity: 'Biodiversity in Good Company' Initiative," presented at the Seminar on the Preparation of a Sustainable COP (March 9, 2021).

Figure 5: Ibid.