

The Vice-Chancellor's Address
Global Forest Observatory Launching Ceremony
Saturday, June 25, 2011

Distinguished Guests, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning!

First of all, thank you for having me here at this Launching Ceremony of the Global Forest Observatory Project this morning. As you have just heard, the Project has two parts:

One will be a 20-hectare forest observatory plot to be established in Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve and the other is a 1-hectare demonstration plot in Shek Kong, that means here.

As I understand it, the forest observatory plot in Tai Po Kau will serve as Hong Kong's **first** such data collection site for the investigation of the long-term forest dynamics and the impact of global climate change on subtropical forests.

It will also be Hong Kong's **first** and, to date, the **only** Forest Dynamic Plot set up to join the international research programme initiated by the Center for Tropical Forest Science, of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute and Harvard University.

In fact, it will be the first plot to be established on secondary forest in a degraded tropical forest landscape, and the research findings will shed light on the conservation of primary forests and the restoration of degraded forests in the region.

I also understand that, once the site is set up, the 20-hectare forest observation, or Forest Dynamic Plot, will give opportunity to local or international researchers as an outdoor "laboratory" for other forestry or climate change related research projects.

These may include carbon sink in tropical forests, changing forest diversity, human impact on forest ecosystems, distribution of tree species, species discovery, and so on.

Since the Hong Kong Forest Dynamic Plot will be set up according to the standard protocol of a worldwide network of such Plots, the data generated in Hong Kong could be combined with those from others in the region – for example, in Mainland China and Taiwan – for regional synthesis and meaningful applications.

The second part of the Project, the 1-hectare demonstration plot to be established here in Shek Kong, on the other hand, is aimed to providing education, training, scientific volunteering and engagement opportunities.

So, by directly involving students or volunteers in scientific research, the Project will be able to raise and enhance public awareness and the understanding of sustainable development and nature conservation in Hong Kong.

The Project will provide tailor-made on-field training programmes for teachers and students under the new Senior Secondary Curriculum. Relevant topics include Applied Ecology under Biology, Geography and Liberal Studies.

I understand the Center for Tropical Forest Science at Harvard will also provide training workshops in Hong Kong, for the project team, relevant HKU postgraduate students and NGO leaders in Hong Kong. It is estimated that 2,000 people will benefit from the training programme, which will be free for many.

So, I can see that this is a significant endeavour in so many ways.

I am glad that the University of Hong Kong is a partner of this collaborative effort.

The Project provides an excellent example of how the University puts Knowledge Exchange into action, where members of the academic, public and private sectors can join forces in contributing to society.

For the past century, the University has committed itself to creating knowledge, providing education, and serving society. Indeed, Knowledge, Heritage and Service constitute the slogan of our Centenary celebration; they are also the values we will continue to stand for as we enter our next century.

My congratulations to the Kadoorie Institute and all those involved in this Global Forest Observatory Project, particularly Prof Peter Hills, Dr Winnie Law and Dr Billy Hau. Your work reaffirms the University's commitment in community outreach on environmental protection, nature conservation and sustainability well being.

For the successful launching of this Global Forest Observatory Project, however, the University is indebted to many partners.

First of all, I would like to thank the Hongkong Bank Foundation for their generous support, without which this Project would not have been possible. This is a fine example of corporate social responsibility.

I would also like to thank the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department for allowing the observatory plot to be set up in the Tai Po Kau Nature Reserve. This is a genuine effort of the government to reach out to the community, working with higher education institutions, NGO and private sectors, for a common cause.

I wish to thank the Center for Tropical Forest Science, of the Smithsonian Tropical Research Institute and Harvard University, for including the HKU Team in the

international research Project and for sharing their research and education expertise here in Hong Kong.

Finally, last but definitely not the least, I wish to thank our neighbour, Kadoorie Farm and Botanic Garden, for providing the land/site for the 1-hectare demonstration plot and serving as the Project's professional collaborator (on voluntary basis) for the first 3 years, and, more important, for taking over the Project from the fourth year onward and providing long-term re-survey and management of the 20-hectare observatory plot. This is no small commitment here.

Thank you.