

**Address from Allerd Stikker, Chairman, Valley Foundation, to the 3<sup>rd</sup> International Forum of the Chinese Taoist Association, Longshu Shan, November 2014**

It is an honour and a pleasure for me to address the International Taoist Forum and I am grateful to have been invited to do so. As I am regretfully not able to be present on this day, my speech will be delivered by Alexander Mercer as a designated representative of the Valley Foundation.

For the last nine years the Valley Foundation has been privileged to participate in and contribute to the establishment of the Taoist Ecology Temple Alliance, which was born in X'ian in 2006 and further expanded at Mao Shan in 2008. In that year the basis was established for an eight-year plan, supported and jointly created by the Taoist communities and the China Taoist Association in Beijing. The eight-year plan was presented by a high-level Taoist delegation at Windsor Castle in 2009.

This fascinating development was supported by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation (ARC) together with the Valley Foundation, which resulted in a long-term collaboration between ARC, the Taoist Ecology Temple Alliance and the China Taoist Association. And all of this arose from the inspiring guidance and active – but suppressed participation --of Martin Palmer, Secretary General of ARC.

Both ARC and the Valley Foundation will continue to work together with the Taoists of China and help them fulfil their role as protectors of China's natural resources, a mission that reflects the traditional wisdom of Taoist scripture, the Taoist respect for nature and the need to conserve the harmony between man, nature and the universe.

The Mao Shan declaration of 2008 and the eight- year plan of 2009 formulated and accepted a number of goals, actions, and a timetable. Since then progress has been achieved in many different ways and it is clear that the Taoist tradition has a lot to offer in restoring and maintaining harmony between human activity and the natural world.

This mission is increasingly mirrored by environmental protection agencies at both central and provincial levels of government, who also want to fight pollution and protect China's natural resources. There is clearly a strong common interest between the traditions of the Taoists and environmental policies of the state.

It therefore seems to me that the central as well as provincial governments in China should look into opportunities for collaboration with the Taoists. A joint effort between these groups might help protect China from the social, ecological and economic effects of environmental degradation.

One such opportunity could be greater assistance from state environmental protection agencies, whose experts could assist the Taoists in monitoring the action plans and goals formulated in the eight- year plan.

As government officials actively participated in the two previous International Taoist Forums in X'ian and in Heng Shan, and are also present at today's forum, it would seem that this opportunity for collaborative action may well become a reality. In this way China could set an example to the international community, demonstrating how ecological, economic, social and cultural values can be harnessed in the quest to restore the harmony between man, nature and the universe.

I would like to express my sincere respect for the participants and organizers of this conference and I wish you all great success and achievement in your endeavour to protect China's natural environment.

Thank you very much for your attention.

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