

Keynote Speech at UN High-Level Symposium on Sustainable Cities

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Director-General, Yangzhou People's Congress Standing Committee
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Dear Mr. Toshihiko Ota, Mayor of Toyota City,

Dear Mr. Nikhil Seth, Director, Division for Sustainable
Development, United Nations Department of Economic and
Social Affairs (DESA)

First I'd like to give my sincere thanks to Under Secretary-General
Wu Hongbo for his invitation to me to attend the High-Level
Symposium on Sustainable Cities: Connecting People,
Environment and Technology. A similar conference, which was
convened in December 2013 in my city Yangzhou has had
profound effect on our sustainable development.

I'd also offer my gratitude to Mayor Toshihiko Ota for his kind
hospitality. As we know, there are many cities in the world which
are known for automobile industry, such as Detroit, USA,
Wolfsburg, Germany, but only City of Toyota takes her name right
from the vehicle. Toyota first came to my knowledge when I was
a teenager football fan. And the name increased its popularity
when a commercial catchword was put into the ears of many
Chinese, Where there is a way, there is a TOYOTA.

Yangzhou, a historic and cultural famous city spanning 2,500 years, is located on the confluence of the Yangtze River, the longest river of China, and the Grand Canal, the longest canal in the world. The latter, together with Tomioka Silk Mill and Related Sites of Japan, was designated as UNESCO world heritage sites last year.

Located within the most dynamic Yangtze River Delta, Yangzhou is only 2 hours drive to Shanghai and 1.5 hours flight to Beijing. With the high-speed train completed in two years, we will be 1 hour away from Shanghai and 4 hours from Beijing.

More than 1,300 years ago in China's Tang Dynasty, Yangzhou was a bustling port city hosting half a million residents and a meeting point for two silk roads both on land and offshore. It is from here that Eminent Monk Jianzhen made 6 attempts to go to Japan to spread the Chinese culture. Till today you find many shared cultures between Yangzhou and Japan, such as architecture.

Our three sister cities in Japan are, Nara, Atsugi, and Karatsu. Yangzhou is frequently visited by many tourists and celebrities including Fukuda Yasuo 福康夫

The past 10 years saw rapid economic development in China, with urbanization a most contributing factor. Compared with 35 years ago, urbanization in China grew from 18% to 60% today.

One grave challenge China faces is farmers gushing into cities. As a result, many cities pulled down low-rise houses and erected skyscrapers to accommodate the immigrants. But not Yangzhou. Thanks to a wise decision made 30 years ago, the old city of Yangzhou is well preserved while a new city has taken shape on the outside.

Measures have also been adopted to uplift the living conditions in old city. Houses are renovated, facilities updated, people's living standards are improving. Yangzhou was awarded UN Habitat Scroll of Honor in 2006 thanks to these measures.

In the past 30 years of industrialization and urbanization, Yangzhou has well preserved the historic and cultural traditions. Here you can see for your own eyes real-life ancient culture co-existing with modern civilization. I believe it serves a fine example for many developing countries.

Sustainability is essential. People move into cities not only for dwelling, but also for jobs. In order to avoid falling into the

‘middle income traps’, we vigorously develop industries to create job opportunities for migrants, especially the young. Our unemployment rate has been kept low and the city’s GDP in 2014 hit RMB 362.5 billion. Harmonious development of industry - job opportunity - urbanization is an invaluable experience we learn.

Ecology also contributes to sustainability. Environments must be protected in development. Nowhere in the Slender Westlake Park, our most popular tourist attraction, can you find an artificial building in sight, because we have adopted strict rules to control the height of surrounding buildings. Instead of calculation, we do it in a simple but practical way of lifting a red balloon at the construction site. If people at the commanding point in the park detects the balloon, it must be lowered till not be seen; this is the limit for buildings to be erected. The Slender Westlake Park now stands the only urban park in China where you don’t get any visual pollution.

It is absolutely true that greater scale and height serve for commercial interest. We have resisted a lot of temptations over the years in our pursuit of building a world-class park. I guess it is the government resolution that works a wonder in China and in the world. It is a good example for overall planning.

With respect to building the new city, we make efforts to protect water-related ecology. For instance, in planning our new central region, which is a water-abundant district consisting of seven rivers and eight islands, instead of making detailed requirements on what to be done, we impose only restrictions on bank width, pollution index, construction density and height, therefore ensuring an ecological city and a sponge city be built in future.

We allocate funds every year to improve green coverage of the city. Yangzhou, a Green and Clean city, is home to some 200 kinds of birds. For us, ecology is more of a tangible benefit than a pleasant look. The *Song Dynasty Folder City Sports Park* has become a popular place for leisure and sports by many since its opening last year.

In present-day China, many people still live in rural areas. We face a challenge to keep the rural landscape while improving people's living standard in the process of modernization. Like Japan at a certain development stage, our rural areas are declining. China's central government has called upon us to have enough patience to follow the historical rules and maintain the characteristics of a locality.

To maintain sustainable development in rural areas, we implement

old-age pension and medical insurance. To help farmers develop healthy lifestyle, we build a square, a basketball stand, a public lighting service, a newspaper stand, and provide coaching services in every rural town and village.

Preserving traditions and heading for modernization, 2015 marks the 2500 anniversary of Yangzhou City. In September 2015, we will organize a big event to celebrate the special moment. I sincerely invite you to visit Yangzhou during the time. In conclusion of my speech, let me quote words of Anna Tibaijuka, former UN Under-Secretary-General after her two visits in Yangzhou, ‘It is a city full of smiling faces, a city of happiness.’ And words of Mr. Francisco Morales, then Chief Representative of Panama to China, and photographer of profession, ‘I found China in Yangzhou’. Former Prime Minister of Japan Fukuda Yasuo finds Yangzhou ‘a green and beautiful city’ that attracts all.

Welcome to China! Welcome to Yangzhou!

Thanks!