

INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON EARTH—HUMANITY RECONCILIATION: Towards Ecological Civilisations through Plural Pathways

HIGHLIGHTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Earth—Humanity Reconciliation International Conference brought together leading scholars and thinkers across science, policy, academia and civil society to explore plural pathways toward peaceful ecological civilisations. Hosted in Suzhou by the Shanghai University of Engineering Science (SUES) and co-organised by the Club of Rome, this historic convening (the first-ever event of CoR in China) is part of the International Decade of Sciences for Sustainable Development (2024–2033) under the auspices of UNESCO, of which the Club of Rome was a founding proponent. The conference counted on the support of the UNESCO Regional Office for East Asia (Beijing), and it emphasised bridging scientific knowledge, cultural worldviews, and governance practices to realign human wellbeing with the health of Earth’s life systems.

Across three days of thematic sessions and a culminating closing panel, participants highlighted the importance of integrative approaches drawing on perspectives and experiences from different geographies and the potential for mutual learning. The systemic governance of

“The conference was a combination of eye-opening, engaging and reflective, also a great glimpse into the culture of the Club of Rome.”

—Participant

transformations towards ecological civilisations as well as an ethical renewal of human development were also highlighted as essential dimensions for further steps forward.

The international conference was preceded by the celebration in Shanghai on 3 November of the *Symposium on Ecological Civilisation: From the “Two Mountain” Concept to Global Action Strategies* where scholars from China and other countries presented deep dive perspectives on specific topics (responsible business management, finance for sustainability, cities and mobility, rural revitalisation, among others).

Also, the activities of the conference were complemented by visits to several locations in Deqing County, including the town of Moganshan, on 8-10 November.

Visit the [Club of Rome website](#) to find all the related resources.

GROUP PHOTO IN SUZHOU ON 7 NOVEMBER 2025





YONGQI LOU, PRESIDENT OF SHANGHAI UNIVERSITY OF ENGINEERING SCIENCE, DURING HIS KEYNOTE ADDRESS

THEMATIC SYNTHESIS

Across the conference, four major thematic currents emerged:

- Cultural-ethical foundations for ecological civilisation** — Participants underscored that ecological transformation requires cultural renewal, relational worldviews, and rethinking humanity's place within the living planet. Chinese philosophical traditions (particularly concepts of harmony) offered grounding for these reflections.
- Governance, economics and material conditions** — Discussions highlighted the need for structural transformation, including circular economies, new development models and public-private collaboration. China's ecological civilisation practices were repeatedly cited as models of governance capacity.
- Science and innovation as drivers for wellbeing** — Speakers recognised that innovation must be intentionally governed toward ecological objectives. Technologies such as AI, quantum systems, water-saving agriculture and renewable energy expansion provide opportunities—but must be evaluated ethically.
- Plural pathways and global cooperation** — The conference emphasised that reconciling humanity and Earth require contributions from diverse cultural, scientific and governance contexts. Multiple pathways—not a singular model—are necessary to reflect varied ecological, geographic, historical and cultural realities.

Visit the [conference photo album](#).



PANEL ON EXPLORING ENERGY AND DECARBONISATION CHALLENGES

“Aligning science with eco-social wellbeing requires intentional governance, not accidents.”

—Paul Shrivastava

“This conference was an historical moment for the Club of Rome, the occasion to better understand China and build conditions for joint thinking and action in mutual respect and learning towards ecological civilisations.”

—Carlos Álvarez Pereira



PANEL ON CULTURAL CONDITIONS FOR ECOLOGICAL WELLBEING: INTEGRATING ALL KNOWLEDGE AND WISDOM FOR REGENERATIVE ECONOMIES AND LIVES

“Innovation must be scalable and pragmatic if it is to transform industries.”

—Anne-Laure Descours

PANEL ON THE MATERIAL CONDITIONS FOR ECOLOGICAL WELLBEING: PROSPERITY AND EQUITY WITHIN PLANETARY BOUNDARIES



THEMATIC OUTCOMES

- **Ecological civilisation** — Strong endorsement of holistic approaches that integrate ethics, governance and science. Chinese ecological civilisation frameworks offer practical lessons in large-scale ecological restoration and long-term planning, as well as an example of strong mobilisation of capacities towards a common goal.
- **Energy systems** - Participants explored decarbonisation pathways, including China’s ETS expansion and renewable energy leadership.
- **Material conditions and industry** — Emphasis on circularity, supply chain transformation and reduction of overconsumption.
- **Science, technology and innovation** — Call for governance models that ensure the role of advanced technologies to enhance planetary health, human wellbeing, peace and international cooperation.
- **Water-food-environment nexus** — Recognition of the urgency of integrated water management and biodiversity protection.
- **Community and cultural transformation** — Importance of storytelling, cultural identity and intergenerational learning.

“The meeting moved sustainability discourse into a new phase—where science, ethics and governance converge through plural pathways.”

—Participant



PANEL ON THE ROLE OF SCIENCE, INNOVATION AND TECHNOLOGY

“Youth are not the leaders of tomorrow—they are the leaders we need today.”

—Yuhan Zheng

“The true alchemy of our time is not to turn lead into gold, but to transform extraction into regeneration.”

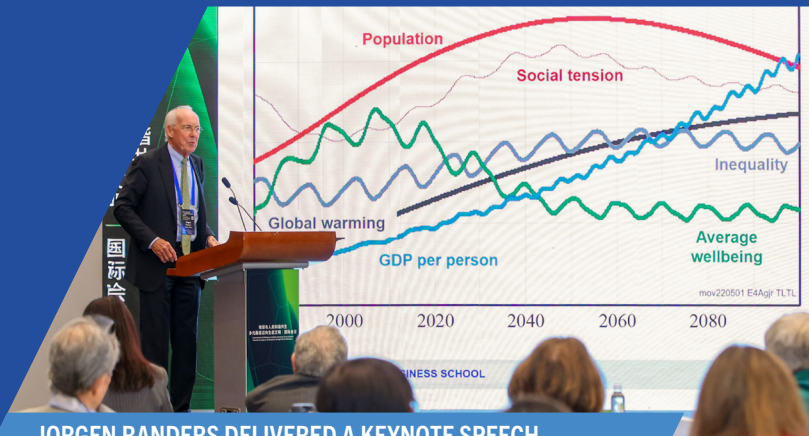
—Shahar Zainuddin



PANEL ON COMMUNITY BUILDING FOR ECOLOGICAL CIVILISATIONS

“Ecological civilisation is not a solo performance, but a symphony where all humanity plays its part.”

—Participant



JORGEN RANDERS DELIVERED A KEYNOTE SPEECH



SILVIA ZIMMERMANN DEL CASTILLO DELIVERED A SPEECH

“Earth does not need saving; humanity needs to change.”

—Participant

CLOSING PANEL REFLECTIONS

The closing panel brought together Club of Rome members and emerging leaders to synthesise insights from the entire conference. Panellists emphasised the urgency of shifting from conceptual frameworks to practical action, noting that humanity faces a narrow window to realign political economy and human development with ecological stability.

Several themes emerged:

- **Intergenerational responsibility** — Younger voices stressed that the planetary crisis demands courage from current leaders and genuine space for youth-led contributions.
- **Rethinking development** — Panellists argued that Earth cannot sustain current models based on unlimited growth of consumption. Economic redesign—including post-growth approaches—was identified as essential.
- **Global solidarity** — The panel highlighted that geopolitical tensions undermine climate cooperation, calling for renewed diplomacy and peace-oriented science.
- **China's role** — Reflections acknowledged China's unique capacity for long-term planning and innovation, positioning it as a vital partner in global ecological transition.
- **Human values** — A recurring message was that ecological civilisation is fundamentally about care, reciprocity, and humility toward the living planet.

Panellists closed with a call for courage, collaboration and sustained engagement between the Club of Rome, Shanghai University of Engineering Science, and partners worldwide.

The international conference was also the occasion for multiple exchanges among attendants that served as preparation for multiple opportunities of collaboration between the Club of Rome and Chinese partners in the domains of science, applied academia and innovative entrepreneurship. Professor Lou, President of SUES, developed explicitly in his concluding remarks the invitation to a strong collaboration programme with the Club of Rome around the creation of eco-innovation labs to demonstrate the feasibility and practical benefits of the concept of ecological civilisation.

View the [conference recording](#).



MAMPHELA RAMPHELE, JOANNA NURSE AND PAUL SHRIVASTAVA IN DISCUSSION

“We must rethink material conditions; our political economy shapes ecological outcomes.”

—Chandran Nair

“规划不是研究未来做什么，而是研究今天怎么做可以有未来”

Planning is not the act of determining what the future should hold, but the discipline of discerning what must be done today to make a sustainable future.



2024 • 2033
International Decade of
Sciences for Sustainable
Development

