

## The Year Of The Rabbit Promises Hope

As pathogenicity of the Omicron virus weakens, China finally downgraded Covid-19 to Category B management, ending the country's three-year zero-Covid policy.

It is the hope of many that things can quickly return to pre-pandemic normalcy where the overall economy can start to grow again – for China and the rest of the world with China back in action.

The Chinese New Year of the Rabbit begins on January 22 this year. The sign of Rabbit is a symbol of longevity, peace, and prosperity in Chinese culture, and 2023 is predicted to be a year of hope.

We in Royal Roots Global wish you a healthy and prosperous Year of the Rabbit!

*Anita Tang, Managing Director*



## U.N. Biodiversity Conference Chaired By China Agrees To Global Action On Nature Through 2030

Representatives from 188 governments, hosted by Canada in Montreal December 7-19, 2022, adopted the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework.

This Framework, reports the United Nations Conference, “aims to address biodiversity loss, restore ecosystems and protect indigenous rights. The plan includes measures to halt and reverse nature loss, including putting 30 percent of the planet and 30 percent of degraded ecosystems under protection by 2030. It also contains proposals to increase finance to developing countries.”

The stakes could not be higher, noted the Conference press report: “The planet is experiencing a dangerous decline in nature as a result of human activity. It is experiencing its largest loss of life since the dinosaurs. One million plant and animal species are now threatened

with extinction, many within decades.”

The Framework consists of four overarching global goals to protect nature, including halting human-induced extinction of threatened species and reducing the rate of extinction of all species tenfold by 2050; sustainable use and management of biodiversity to ensure that nature's contributions to people are valued, maintained and enhanced; fair sharing of the benefits from the utilization of genetic resources, and digital sequence information on genetic resources; and that adequate means of implementing the Framework accessible to all Parties, particularly Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States.

The Conference, delayed by the COVID pandemic and China's public health policy, moved from Kunming to Montreal.

## China And Canada Led Biodiversity Conference Where 10,000 Participants Set Environment Goals

More than 10,000 scientists, government officials and activists gathered in Montreal for two weeks in December 2022 for the “world’s most important biodiversity conference,” according to reporting by the United Nations, a conference facilitator.

UN Environmental Executive Director Inger Andersen emphasized that implementation is now the key. “Success will be measured by our rapid and consistent progress in implementing what we have agreed to. The entire UN system is geared to support its implementation so we can truly make peace with nature.”

The UN Framework for achievement features 23 targets to achieve by 2030, including:

- Effective conservation and management of at least 30 percent of the world’s land, coastal areas, and oceans. Currently 17 percent of land use and 8 percent of marine areas are under protection.
- Restoration of 30 percent of terrestrial and marine ecosystems
- Reduce to near zero the loss of areas of high biodiversity importance and high ecological integrity

- Halving global food waste
- Phasing out or reforming subsidies that harm biodiversity by at least US\$500 billion per year, while scaling up positive incentives for biodiversity conservation and sustainable use.
- Mobilizing at least US\$200 billion per year from public and private sources for biodiversity-related funding
- Raising international financial flows from developed to developing countries to at least US\$30 billion per year
- Requiring transnational companies and financial institutions to monitor, assess and transparently disclose risks and impacts on biodiversity through their operations, portfolios, supply and value chains.

Countries also approved agreements on planning, monitoring, the UN reported, to ensure that there is not “a further acceleration in the global rate of species extinction, which is already at least tens of hundreds of times higher than it has averaged over the past 10 million years.”

## China Sets Sights On Better Science Literacy, Issues Guidelines On Promoting National Effort

China aims to have 15 percent of its citizens become scientifically literate by 2025 and increase this figure to 25 percent by 2035, according to a new national guideline on promoting the popularization of science.

Released by the Communist Party of China Central Committee and the State Council, the guidelines said science popularization is as equally vital as scientific and technological innovation, a notion highlighted by President Xi Jinping in 2016.

“Science popularization plays a crucial role in nurturing the scientific spirit, fostering new science and technology talent, and creating a social environment conducive for innovation,” said Wang Zhigang, Minister of Science and Technology.

Li Meng, Vice-Minister of Science and Technology, said the Ministry would encourage the creation of quality works in science popularization for frontier sciences with significant public interest, such as carbon technologies, artificial intelligence, gene editing, quantum technologies, and high-speed mobile internet.

Li said China’s science popularization budget was US\$2.4 billion in 2020, 80 percent of which came

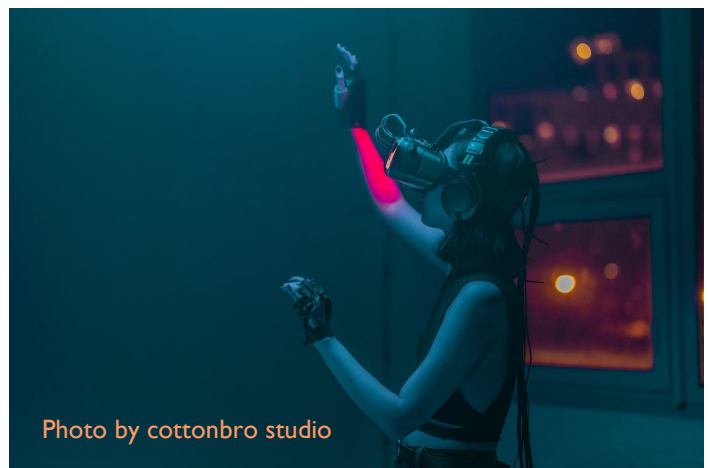


Photo by cottonbro studio

from the government. He said the guideline encourages the private sector to participate in the popularization of science, such as by establishing new science education venues and providing funding.

Meng Qinghai, Vice-President of the China Association for Science and Technology, said the Association has 3.45 million volunteers and 12 million information officers working on the local level for science communication.



## China Plants Trees, Nurtures Forests To Enhance Environment, Combat Climate Change

“Why is a quarter of the world’s new forests coming from China?” asked Xinhua News Service from Beijing, October 2, 2022.

Because it had been increasingly losing green land to desertification, to protect diversity of species, to develop carbon sinks – and, not least, because of the continuous promotion of China’s President Xi Jinping to build a nation in harmony with nature.

When the People’s Republic of China was founded in 1949, forests covered only 8.6 percent of its land area. Constant use of wood for cooking and heating had denuded forests and reduced green cover, resulting in environmental deterioration, desertification advancing from the north, and soil erosion. It was under such circumstances that China launched a national tree-planting campaign to build forest belts in north, northeast, and northwest. The idea was to prevent large swatches of land from being subsumed by the advancing deserts. The plan grew to involve the nation in a variety of reforestation and afforestation activities including these:

In 1979, China designated March 12 as National Tree Planting Day, with the National People’s Congress stipulating that every able-bodied citizen above 11 should plant three to five trees each year. From 1982 to 2021, records show that citizens voluntarily planted some 8.1 billion trees. (U. S. states join in a similar program – National Arbor Day – the last Friday of April.) This effort is widely publicized, highlighting President Xi’s successive plantings since

2012, with *China Daily* noting in October 2022 that Xi said he joined others in planting trees “to make his contribution in building a green and beautiful China and to encourage society, especially the youth, to promote ecological advancement.”

More recently, China’s internet allows residents to adopt trees by paying contributions online, or to perform low-carbon activities like taking public transportation in exchange for a real tree to be nurtured in their name. Some 200 million trees had been planted this way by the end of May 2022, reducing 12 million tons of carbon dioxide, reported *Xinhua*, October 2, 2022.

China also is reclaiming formerly green land. Saihanba in the north was once a royal hunting ground (1644-1911). In 1962, the government attracted some 24,369 people from 18 provinces to plant trees there, according to *Science and Technology Daily* (9-9-2021). Planting occurred over two years. Today, 82 percent of Saihanba is forested. A system for fire prevention and suppression was established with 100 firemen and fire-fighting vehicles. Nine observational towers and fire escape routes were established.

Such foresight was followed in 2022, with the national establishment of a “Forest Chief” scheme to secure 1.2 million “Forest Chiefs” to help further forest development and protection, according to *Xinhua*, August 13, 2022. It was about this time that *Washington Post* reported the summer heat wave was breaking all China records, but there has been no report of any major loss in the emerging new forests and parks.

China’s forest coverage has now reached 23.04 percent, up 2.68 percent from 2012, reports *Global Times*, and a dramatic rise from the 8.6 percent in 1949.

Of concern now is assuring that the needed imports of lumber are obtained legally from other countries, some of which are not protecting their own trees.

At the World’s Economic Forum in Davos-Klosters, Switzerland, May 24, 2022, Xie Zhenhua, China’s Special Envoy For Climate Change, spoke out in support of the United Nations Decade on Ecosystem Restoration, and disclosed China’s plan for its own ecosystem:

“I am announcing here that China aims to plant and conserve 70 billion trees within 10 years to green our planet, combat climate change and increase forest carbon sinks.”

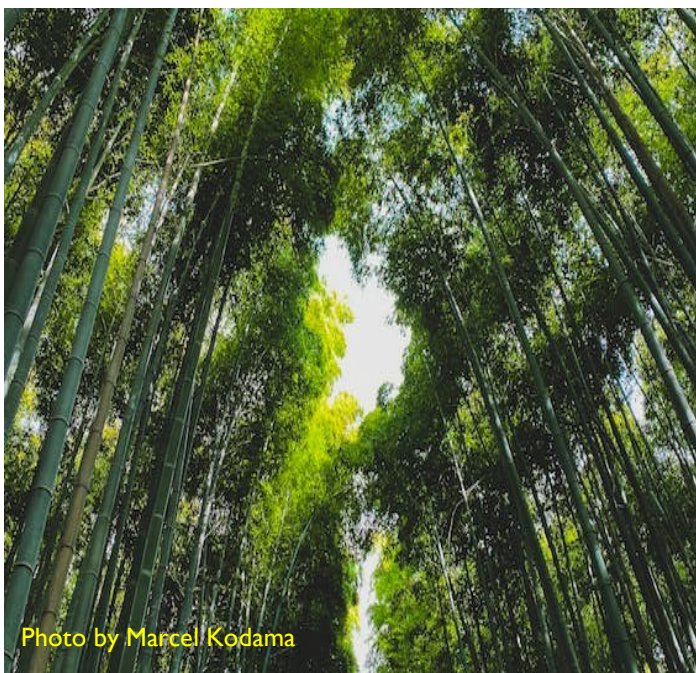


Photo by Marcel Kodama

## University Of Chicago Opens New Year Of China Programs

The University of Chicago's rich history of educational collaboration in China dates from the early 1900s and is growing in the 2020s, highlighting rigorous research by scholars as well as leadership training for Chinese high-school students.

UChicago now has a Center in Beijing (established 2010), and the Yuen Campus in Hong Kong (2018). Its engagement with China thrives on relationships with key local institutions. Its faculty partners with them to examine contemporary social and scientific issues. Involved are the University's Baker-Friedman Institute China, the Report of the State of Children in China, and, among others, the Tripart Collaboration for Advancing Social Work in China. The UChicago Graduate China Forum, founded in 2015, has been one the most important student-run forums in the Midwest of the United States. "Embracing Change – Rethinking Opportunities in an Era of Transformation," its two-day conference held in April, 2022, involved leaders worldwide.

Among the many ongoing relationships of UChicago in China, it has been working with Peking University and the Hong Kong Polytechnic University to foster development of professional social work education and research. Its Energy Policy Institute housed at the University's Center in Beijing has faculty and researchers on the ground in China. Among other involvements, collaboration between the University's Pritzker School of Medicine and Wuhan University's School of Medicine has led to curricular reform at Wuhan and a new generation of Chinese medical professionals with close ties to Chicago.

Chicago's Baker-Friedman Institute China presented research in a December 2022 two-day conference at the University and, with hardly skipping a

day, opened a new series of seminars there on January 18, 2023. The BFI-China's Research Conference assembled established economic scholars to discuss recent work on issues related to the Chinese economy and financial markets. The subjects were gritty, for examples: "Judicial Independence, Local Protectionism and Economic Integration. Evidence from China," presented by Wang Shaoda of UChicago, or "Institutional Weakness and Societal Vulnerability. Evidence from the Sichuan Earthquake" by Cao Yiming at Stanford University.

Starting 2023 for BFI China and the University, Laura Starks of the University of Texas will lead a January 18 Seminar "Capital Market Development: China and Asia." Participants will analyze the positive and negative issues in the functioning of Asia's capital markets, toward identifying reforms and applications of technology that could further improve them. Financial market developments go hand-in-hand with economic growth.

### Students

UChicago's China involvement builds relationships with Chinese students from high school as well as with academics, scientists, business, and political leaders. Tenth grade students are eligible to apply for scholarships to participate in a one-week-long, remotely taught course, "Choosing Leadership: Learning and Leading in the 21st Century." Through readings, lectures, discussions and hands-on application of course materials, students will learn from University of Chicago faculty across a range of departments.

The deadline for English-fluent Chinese students to apply is March 1; the program runs virtually July 24-28, 2023.



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