

Building environmental protection into progress

環保新一頁 - 跨界別合作

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With urbanisation progressing at an exponential rate and the Earth pushed to its limits by relentless exploration and consumption of natural resources in pursuit of developed lifestyles, climate change and global warming are now critical issues for the world at large. In Hong Kong, the government and numerous organisations are working hard on conservation-related issues and awareness-raising. Yet for alumnus Dr William Yu Yuen-ping, Chief Executive Officer of World Green Organisation, environmental protection needs to go beyond traditional values like “less consumption”, “waste reduction” and “recycling”. To evolve into sustainable development, he believes, conservation must be integrated with the economy and people’s livelihoods.

From multinational to environmental NGO

Dr Yu graduated from CityU with a BA (Hons) in International Business (First Class). He worked in multinational companies for more than 10 years. Then, at the

peak of his business career, he decided to embrace a new challenge: a PhD in Energy and Environment at the University of Cambridge. In the course of a few years, Dr Yu morphed from an executive into an expert on energy, environment and climate.

Before heading to Cambridge, Dr Yu made a promise: “I had seen how the energy crisis has precipitated global warming,” he said. “When I come back, I told myself, I want to contribute to the well-being of the planet.”

Alleviation of poverty amid conservation

On his return to Hong Kong, Dr Yu thus became fully engaged in conservation, initially as Head of the Climate Programme at the World Wide Fund for Nature. A highlight of his four-year stay at the non-governmental organisation (NGO) was inspiring the widespread adoption of the international Earth Hour initiative in Hong Kong to emphasise the need for energy saving among companies and individuals.

In 2012, he founded his own NGO, World Green Organisation, to put his vision of conservation into practice. “Traditional views on environmental protection have become obsolete,” Dr Yu noted. “I started my own organisation to raise awareness of more contemporary concepts in Hong Kong, such as carbon emissions, carbon footprints, and energy poverty.”

This in turn led to exploration of issues such as how to alleviate human poverty to advance conservation and the reallocation of social resources. Being able to recognise and prioritise people’s needs, especially those of the less well off, is particularly important when determining sustainable development strategies, he said.

Dr Yu terms his own organisation a provider of environmental solutions rather than a pressure group. He visits grassroots communities to understand their lives and needs. He also donates energy-saving appliances, daily necessities and food to “energy-poor families”, protecting the planet on the one hand, and helping to improve people’s lives on the other.

Wiser allocation of society's resources could easily reduce today's wasteful ways, Dr Yu noted. With the prospect of soaring healthcare expenditure to cope with the city's ageing society, for example, he organised the Green WALK Hong Kong event in 2016 to urge people to walk more to enhance their health and decrease carbon emissions.

Cross-sector collaboration

With his international business degree and wide-ranging experience in multinational corporations, Dr Yu is also well equipped to understand corporate concerns when designing conservation programmes and helping to publicise sustainable activities. "Conservation is no longer an independent agenda item but one that requires joint expertise and input from a variety of fields and perspectives to make a significant and effective impact," he said.

In addition to his CEO role at World Green Organisation, Dr Yu currently works as an Adjunct Professor at CityU, teaching business ethics, sustainable risk management and related subjects to draw attention to environmental protection issues. "This is another type of cross-sector collaboration!" he said.



Dr Yu (left), Mr Wong Kam-sing (centre), JP, Secretary for the Environment, and Mr Lo Bing-chung (right), Director (Corporate Communications and External Relations) at The Link, donate food at the "Linking Food Waste with Love - From the Golden Age to the Greens" launch ceremony. 余博士(左)、環境局局長黃錦星先生, JP(中), 及領展企業傳訊及對外關係總監盧炳松先生(右)於領展「愛·匯聚計劃」的「食物送出愛 - 長幼共融新鮮食物捐贈計劃」啟動禮上捐贈食物。

現今城市發展急速，天然資源不斷被開採和耗用，導致全球暖化問題日益嚴重。因此，綠色生活成為時下熱門議題，政府及各界都致力推廣環保。可是，世界綠色組織 (WGO) 行政總裁余遠聘博士卻認為環保不再只是局限於傳統的理念，如「減少使用」、「物盡其用」和「循環再用」，他認為要達致可持續發展，必須將環保、經濟及民生三者合而為一。

挑戰自我

商業管理出身的余博士，是香港城市大學國際商業文學士一級榮譽畢業生，其後任職跨國企業十多年，當其事業如日方中之際，他決定試闖全新領域，遠赴英國劍橋大學修讀能源經濟學博士學位。於短短幾年間，他由商界人士，搖身一變成為能源經濟及氣候專家。

余博士在負笈劍橋前許諾：「我目睹能源危機令全球暖化，已成為刻不容緩的世界問題，希望學成歸來後可為我們的地球出一分力。」

環保扶貧

回港後，余博士積極投入環保事業，先加入世界自然基金會擔任氣候項目主管，在任四年期間，「地球一小時」可謂他的得意之作。其後他更於2012年創立非政府組織WGO，以嶄新的理念繼續宣揚環保。

余博士指出：「傳統的環保觀念已經不合時宜，我希望可以把一些全新的環保概念帶進香港，例如碳排放、碳足印、能源貧窮等，這就引伸出『環保扶貧』、『社會資源調配』等的概念。」

為了讓現時的環保工作更為人性化，余博士主張以關顧民生的需要為前提。他的組織是一個熱衷為社會提供解決方案的非政府組織，而非環保壓力團體。他希望可以利用環保的專業知識解決社會問題，從而做到「環保扶貧」。他會落區考察，了解基層市民的生活環境，又會轉贈節能電器、日常用品或剩餘食物給「能源貧窮戶」，既環保亦可減輕他們的經濟負擔。

余博士又認為，透過調配社會資源，可避免造成資源浪費。為了減輕政府日後因人口老化所帶來的醫療開支及基建壓力，他亦舉辦了環保步行活動「地球·敢『動』日」，鼓勵大眾多步行，以減少碳排放，並增強人們的健康。

跨界別合作

余博士表示：「環境保育已經不是單一議題，而是需要涉及不同領域的專家，以各種專業知識，運用不同的觀點與角度跨界別合作，才能更加有效推動環保。」國際商業的學術背景，以及他在跨國企業的工作經驗，讓余博士更了解商界實際運作模式。以度身訂造適切性的環保方案，應用於宣傳及環保活動工作上。現時，他除了WGO的行政總裁工作外，還應邀返母校城大擔任客席教授，主講商業倫理、可持續性的風險管理等學科，以推動更多界別對環保議題的關注，他開章明義地表示：「這也是跨界別合作的一種！」



Dr Yu calling on government officials and departments to work together to make Hong Kong a liveable and healthy city at Green WALK Hong Kong 2016.

余博士於第一屆地球·敢「動」日2016呼籲政府官員及部門攜手合作打造一個適宜居住及健康的香港。



Dr William Yu (third left) takes part in the first annual Green WALK Hong Kong, with primary school students and other participants in Central. 余博士(左三)與嘉賓和小學生一起參與在中環舉辦的地球·敢「動」日。