

Honghe Declaration

Global declaration on protection and development of terraces

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From November 11th to 15th, the most beautiful season for Hani terraces in Honghe Prefecture, we, the representatives and scholars from 16 countries, terrace farmers and representatives from international organizations including UNESCO, FAO, and the Ramsar Convention, as well as a representative from the US Environmental Protection Agency, have gathered together in the capital city of Honghe Hani and Yi People's Autonomous Prefecture, China, to hold the First Terraced Landscapes Conference, in order to explore ways and methods to protect and develop terraced cultures worldwide.

All participants including scholars, farmers and representatives of the international organizations jointly declare that:

1. Terraces are agricultural, ecological systems which are found around the world. They represent an agricultural system created by numerous cultures over thousands of years of history. The terraces embody the creative wisdom and the labor of mankind. They further illustrate the close integration of humans and nature, and the need to safeguard biodiversity and cultural diversity. For thousands of years, the terraces were not only the cornerstone on which many cultures were built, but they also nourished large populations around the world. However, the terraces not only satisfied people's material needs, but also served as repositories of culture.

2. For the last half century, globalization and economic integration have severely impacted on the terraces, and imposed challenges for the people who farm them. Many terraces have been abandoned, and many cultures linked with the terraces are endangered – with some close to extinction. At such a critical moment, the question of how to protect the tradition of the terraces, and how to develop terraces for the future is a priority.

3. The protection and development of terraces is the common responsibility of all of society, including governments; scholars and researchers; farmers; businessmen and other members of society. All must share the responsibility of managing , protecting, and caring for the terraces.

4. To protect and develop the terraces, you first have to address what is valued. We believe that the value of terraces is not based upon a monetary value. The culture of terraces embodies a system of values. In addition to providing food for survival, the terraces have scientific, cultural, historical, philosophical, religious, ecological and aesthetic value. As such, they cannot be replaced by any other agricultural system.

5. What is particularly noteworthy is that the nature of terrace cultures embodies harmoniousness, namely a harmonious coexistence between man and nature; a harmonious coexistence between man and god (as a cultural symbol of nature); and a harmonious coexistence among humans themselves. The harmoniousness of terrace cultures is sufficiently strong to moderate conflicts and contradictions that occur between different ethnic groups, different cultures and different countries. This is why the ancient cultures of terraces possess significance for today, and bear importance for the future.

6. The preservation and well being of the terraces requires the bringing together the resources and expertise of government, experts and scholars, local people and agencies. All policies applied to terraces should prioritize protection, and secondly appropriate development based upon science which underpins sustainability. Any approach should must take into account not only present impacts, but also effects on later generations. From planning to implementation, we must heed the voices of both scientists and practical experts, namely the farmers who are the stewards of the land.

At present, the most urgent task is to develop a truly sensitive scientific understanding of terrace culture, and neither abandon nor exploit them. In order for the terraces to survive, we must combine a respect for tradition and indigenous knowledge with

modern methods and expertise. It is only in this way that we can guarantee a healthy future for the terraces and the unique human contribution that they represent.

What will be the future of terraces rests upon our understanding and awareness of what we will do now.

We wish, through our joint efforts, that the terraces will last forever, benefiting future generations.

15 November 2010

Mengzi, Honghe Prefecture, Yunnan, China