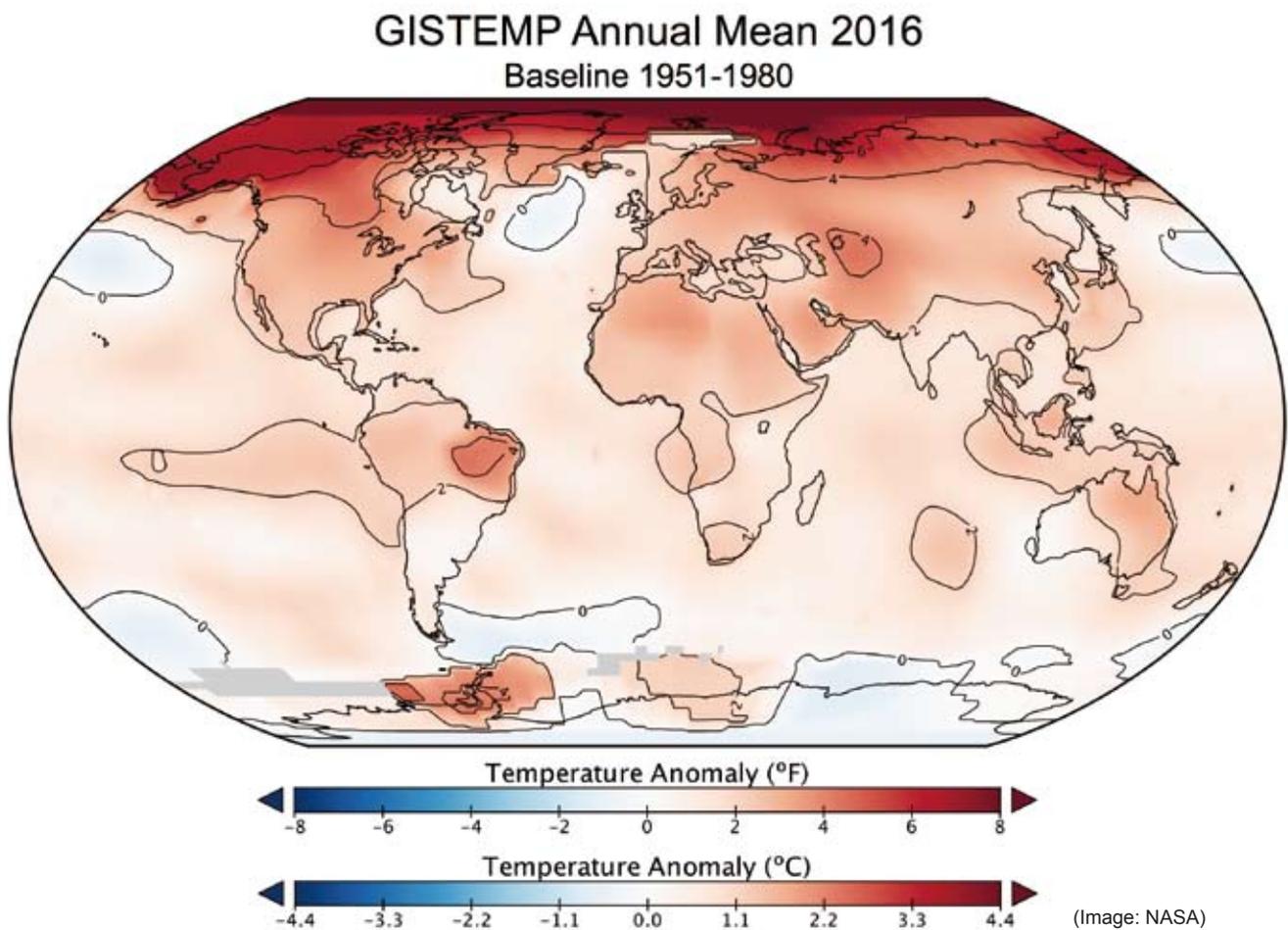


Policy Design for Green Transition: Proposal Strategy for Governments of Both Developed and Developing Economies

By SONG Jianlan (Staff Reporter)



We just had the warmest year ever recorded on the Earth: Globally-averaged temperatures in 2016 were 0.99°C (1.78°F) warmer than the mid-20th century mean, according to an analysis by scientists at NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS). Can we cap the temperature rise under 2°C, as promised by the Paris Climate Agreement? Once again, we hear the call for green transition, and corresponding policy design as well.

The climate agreement arrived at the Paris Climate Conference in September 2015, with commitment to capping the temperature rise under 2°C, marked the first-ever universal legally binding global climate pact reached by humankind, and is widely deemed as a milestone achievement of historic implications. A result from intensive collective efforts made by 195 nations, it represents strong, unified human promise to a more sustainable mode of economic development.

This seems to offer a rosier future for the Earth. But **how** can we get there? For science policy researchers, this makes necessary well-designed policies aligned with orchestrated actions aimed at green transition, which involves “decoupling” of social welfare and economic prosperity from resource use, environmental destruction and greenhouse gas emissions. The implementation of green transition, as observed by researchers, poses a pressing challenge for both developed and developing countries. Driven by this common concern, an international workshop was held in September 2016, Beijing to discuss possible and optimized policy strategy to promote the transition, jointly organized by the Institutes of Science and Development, CAS (CASISD), a top science think-tank of China, and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES), Germany.

Joining together academic but policy-oriented experts from both industrialized and emerging economies, the organizers hoped to explore strategy and policy approaches for policy design aimed at a smooth green transition, and provide advice for policy makers from countries of both the South and the North; meanwhile, they also sought to find out appropriate ways to engage

with major stakeholders of the transition, and foster international cooperation in the context of green transition, with consistent awareness of the diverse situations in industrialized and emerging economies.

Common Challenge

What prompted the experts to address policy challenges for green transition also included the 17 goals and 169 targets set by the 2030 Agenda on Sustainable Development, adopted in September 2015 at the occasion of the United Nations’ 70th anniversary. According to organizers of the workshop, it remains unclear how the different dimensions of sustainable development can be aligned with each other in terms of public policy.

As noted by policy scholars, current policies mainly focus on traditional measures of environment protection, like pollution control. On the other hand, with some progress in changing of energy mix, efforts have also been made to reduce emissions of greenhouse gases. However, very few alternatives are available so far, and long-term goals for comprehensive green transition, for example upgrade of industrial structure, seem to be harder to substantiate, and a well-defined strategy for overall green development is still missing.

“While there are debates and research in environmental policy circles, as well as a controversial discussion of what it would take to keep future resource use within the limit of a finite planet,” the co-organizers stated: “this discussion has not been transformed into comprehensive policy strategies in most countries so far. Neither has this happened in the industrialized world of the Global North which is historically responsible for most of the current



Overview of the workshop.



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environmental destructions and remains the major user of humanity's common resources, nor and even less so in the newly industrializing countries."

Although the responsibility remains largely with the economically rich and technologically advanced countries to take the lead in radically transforming our economies towards sustainability in all its dimensions (economic, social and ecological), emerging economies also have to proactively engage in this endeavor, explained the co-organizers, citing the "shared but differentiated responsibilities" principle of the Paris climate agreement.

Pooling Ideas from North and South

To find out a possible roadmap for the "decoupling" of human production of goods and services from resources, material and energy consumption to a necessary extent at a necessary speed, program of the workshop was specially designed to start from presentations of local studies from both industrialized and emerging economies, followed by a panel discussion and later discussions of parallel working groups with focus on various issues in the green transition. After presentations of results from the working groups, a roundtable discussion was held to identify findings emerging from the discussions that deserved further exploration and investigation. Subsequently, Prof. Dr. Berthold Kuhn, Adjunct Professor at Otto Suhr Institute of Political Science, Free University of Berlin (FU), Germany was selected to draft a workshop

report, with summary of lessons learned from different countries, as well as proposed strategy and approaches for policy makers as results from the discussions of the parallel working groups. The draft was later circulated among all participants for further modification before finally emerging as a mature proposal.

At the country presentation session, representatives for five countries, industrialized and emerging economies included, introduced the *status quo* in their respective countries and presented the results from their studies based on local facts.

Prof. Dr. WANG Yi, expert in public policy and strategy for sustainable development, and Deputy Director of CASISD, introduced efforts made and comprehensive measures taken by China during the period from 2005 to 2016 to build ecological civilization and the blueprint for green development set for the 13th Five-Year Plan of the country, including attempts in drafting climate change law, carbon trading regulations and environmental taxation law.

Representative of Japan, Dr. Shota Furuya, researcher from Institute for Sustainable Energy Policies (ISEP), gave a report on the significant change triggered by the social impact of Fukushima disaster and the subsequent rapid growth of solar PV development, with special attention paid to social acceptance of renewable energies, derivative problems and countermeasures.

Representative for India, Kanika Chawla, Senior Programme Lead, Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW), grasped the attention of fellow participants by opening up the black box of green transition, asking whether it is an opportunity or a challenge for her country, with emphasis attached to the booming renewable energy industries. With analysis of the driving forces for the transition as well as the existing problems, particularly with the case of solar industry, she left the question open for further observation.

Prof. Dr. Miranda Schreurs, Director of Environmental Policy Research Centre, Free University of Berlin (FU), Germany, reviewed the trajectories of green transition in Germany in her presentation titled "Going Green: The German Energy Transition (Energiewende)", with highlights given to encouraging efforts from communities in support for green energy. "Over 50% of German territory has renewable energy, climate or energy efficiency plans," introduced she.

Finally, Brad Markell, Executive Director of Industrial Union Council, American Federation of Labor and Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL-CIO) gave

an overview of the green transition in USA, with a brief introduction of the economic and political framework of the energy sector, as well as the regulation framework of national, regional and state levels, and at last an analysis of energy policy challenges in USA against a political context. “Renewable energy will grow strongly in all cases”, he predicted however, citing change in tax and cost assumptions as driving factors, and data signaling continued economic growth despite drop in emission intensity.

At the session of panel discussion, distinguished experts from both industrialized and emerging countries were invited to share their studies and thoughts along ecological, economic and social dimensions. Prof. SHENG Fulai, Head of Economic Research Unit, United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP) shared his viewpoints and policy proposals from international organizations; and Prof. Dr. Berthold Kuhn from Free University of Berlin (FU), Germany gave a talk on lessons learned from successes and failures of industrialized economies. Other distinguished speakers included Prof. Dr. ZHANG Yongsheng, Vice Director-General and Research Fellow at the Department of Development Strategy and Regional Economy, Development Research Center of the State Council (DRC), China, and Prof. Dr. ZHANG Junjie, Director of Environmental Research Center and Director of Master Environmental Policy Program, Duke Kunshan University.

Brainstorming

Apparently, the presentations provided the participants with broad, diverse materials, which supported and inspired vibrant brainstorming in working groups and the follow-up roundtable discussion.

Still, it was challenging to work out implementable policy strategies and solutions applicable both for policy makers and stakeholders in a two-day workshop, even for experts. But now they were arranged into three working groups to figure out a really workable framework.

Meanwhile it also proved to be of great fun. “I really enjoy this,” said Prof. CHEN Hao, principal scientist of the School of Economics and Resource Management under Beijing Normal University. Many experts agreed with him, praising that this special session differentiated the workshop from others.

CHEN presided over the discussion of the working group I, which focused on the assigned topic “strategy and policy mix”. At first the group explored into an extensive spectrum of issues, with consistent awareness that the



Mr. Christoph Pohlmann, FES Resident Representative for China, gives remarks at the workshop.

outcome needed to fit the needs of both developed and developing economies. The teammates kept contributing to the hot discussion with fresh ideas, and on the second day, all of a sudden the idea of “policy learning” came to CHEN. Why not adopt this approach to embrace complex situations and needs of such broad diversity of countries?

Prof. Dr. Miranda Schreurs agreed with the idea and followed up to fill in the framework with details. Based on the pouring in ideas from teammates, she started drafting a report to be presented later the same day. “Let’s talk over the text on the screen and make our ‘cook book’ of policy mix,” suggested Schreurs at a point, in a joking tone. She turned on the projector and the group worked effectively to produce a “cook book” with enriched “ingredients”.

Other two groups, working on “technology and finance” and “stakeholders and social challenges” respectively, each produced a report summarizing the discussion. On the afternoon of the second day, representatives for all the three working groups reported to the participants the results from their discussions.

All this has led to a proposal with enriched contents addressing issues covered by the working groups. (For details please refer to page 226.)

According to Prof. WANG Yi, the final report of the international workshop would be presented to related governmental authorities of China for reference. The report would also be sent to counterpart authorities in Germany, as suggested by Mr. Christoph Pohlmann, Resident Representative for China of FES at the closing ceremony of the workshop.