

Opening Ceremony of International Centre of Excellence on Coal Mine Methane in China

Opening Speech

Mr. Raymond Pilcher, Chair, UNECE Group of Experts on Coal Mine
Methane

Good morning, **zǎo shàng hǎo!** It is my privilege and honor on the half of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe's Group of Experts on Coal Mine Methane to be here today and to welcome you all to the auspicious beginning of what promises to be another great achievement for Shanxi Coking Coal Group, Shanxi Province, and this wonderful country. The Group of Experts on CMM endorses this center of excellence because it will become a repository and knowledgebase for applied science, engineering, and technology that comprise the best practices for managing methane extraction and use at coal mines. The Government of the People's Republic of China, the provincial government of Shanxi Province and Shanxi Coking Coal Group have come together to create a new entity that is a public-private partnership with an important mission to operate under the umbrella of the United Nations.

I beg your indulgence as I make a couple of personal comments, about China and the work that I have had the privilege to take part in of over the last three decades: I made my first trip to China in 1990 with USEPA and worked for the UNDP and the Global Environmental Facility for next few years. I was

privileged to work with CCII and others to author a resource assessment of coal mine and coalbed methane in China, which was published by the USEPA in 1991.

I returned again each year for several years and met many coal miners and became friends with members of CCII, CUCBM and others as the CBM and CMM industry of China began to develop. We eventually helped open the USEPA's a Coalbed Methane Clearinghouse with CCII that still exists and continues to work as an information clearinghouse and well know organizer of an important annual conference.

The years have passed, but my trips to China continue as I have traveled to many coal mines and most of the provinces of China. I am proud of this country, **wǒ wéi zhōng guó zì háo**, as I have seen remarkable changes in China's coal industry, its economy and witnessed the growing importance of China as a world leader. I am the beneficiary of these years of work— as I have learned much from my work in China, I have made many strong friendships, have brought my family to China and one of my daughters studied in China during her university years .

For these reasons, I am pleased to see this concept of an International Center of Excellence for Coal Mine Methane in China become a reality. This elegant idea was conceived and offered as a plan of action at a meeting of the Group of Experts by Dr. David Creedy. I know that he has been instrumental in making it become a reality here: Dr. Creedy, today, it becomes a reality. Thank you!. Shanxi Coking coal Group has demonstrated

its innovation and leadership in capture and use of CMM by installing systems that are making it possible to see the day when it can operate all of its coal mines with near-zero methane emissions.

SCCG's support of this center and its goals is an act of open-heartedness, generosity, and dedication to principles-based best practices: by opening this UN International Center of Excellence for Coal Mine Methane, the management of SCCG, and Mr. Jin, are pledging to offer their assistance and training to the mining sector of China and to their brothers and sisters abroad.

They join a young, but growing family, with the newly opened International Center of Excellence in Poland, leading members of which join us here today. These organization will stand as pillars upon which new achievements will be built, and from which good ideas and leadership will spring.

Best of all, this International Center of Excellence for Coal Mine Methane has earned the privilege to fly the flag of the United Nations, train others in best practices, work to save the lives of miners, improve the local and global environment and help design a secure and sustainable energy future for not just Shanxi province, but other provinces throughout China and the world.

Konzi (Confucius) said *If you think in terms of a year, plant a seed; if in terms of ten years, plant trees; if in terms of 100 years, teach the people.*

This is a proud moment, but we can only take a moment to bask in the glory of this morning, our mission as experts is to go and teach best practices to the people. This is tough assignment, but one that I know has the backing of

a leader in the coal industry and government that is not new to taking bold steps that impact the future. Lead by example! Modern Chinese history has proven that this is a powerful way to transform knowledge into practice. Hold the flag high, and work hard and the center will have a an impact that lasts a hundred years!