

URL: <https://stvp.stanford.edu/blog/videos/china-future-of-global-environment>

Peter Seligmann, CEO of Conservation International, believes that China is the future of global environment, a country leading the world on how to preserve its natural ecosystems. He emphasizes that once the relationship between wealth, health and environment is realized by society, people will begin to understand that long-term survival is going to depend upon the availability of resources.



Transcript

China is the single most important nation on this planet in terms of the future of our global environment.. For one significant reason they're important because of what's there and they have extraordinarily significant forest and biological diversity.. More importantly, it's what they consume, what they will consume as it develops.. China has taken some very, very powerful steps to protect biological diversity in their own country.. They put a very effective ban on logging of all growth forests.. They have an aggressive effort to reforest.. If there is a country that's leading the way in terms of that, it's China.. China has also taken very bold steps in terms of dealing with the emission standards.. They're saying we're going to raise it above as twice as rigorous as US standards.. Because they understand the impact of our standards on their quality of life is going to be disastrous..

That's the good news.. The bad news is that China has not reduced their demand for wood.. So when we go Liberia or Peru or Brazil or we go to Papua New Guinea, the companies that we are dealing with are Chinese companies that are searching for other sources of wood.. We have to as a conservation movement figure out how to engage at that kind of a scale.. And so for us at CI the big challenges have been not how do we operate until we feel good but how do we operate so we can get to a scale that will make a big difference? If I look at the biggest issue that I think that we haven't move in phase right now, it's a lack of public interest or understanding of what the downside is going to be if our environment deteriorates.. It's a lack of understanding of the health impacts.. It's the lack of understanding of the wealth impacts.. And I don't blame that on society.. I take full responsibility for that.. I think that we in the conservation movement have failed in quantitatively proving that there are relationships between health, wealth and environment..

That's what we're going to push on.. The human dimension.. And if we're able to do that, society will begin to notice the change.. And the partners in doing this are surprisingly going to be the major corporations on this earth.. And the reason they're going to do it is because they understand more than any government.. They understand that their long-term survival is going to depend upon the availability of resources.. They're going to understand that they should get ahead of the curb in terms of public perception and interest in environment.. And so instead of having kind of the mixed message, the message of which is you got to choose between jobs and the environment, which is a message that everybody hears.. That message I predict will change and it's going to change because companies are going to begin to talk about sustainability.. And also the consumers would not get this feeling that they have to choose between the good, between environment and jobs..

They're going to begin to say, "You know what? I can have both." That will change public opinion and that will change our elected officials' positions on environment.. So I think that that really is what is in front of us and that's what we have to succeed in addressing if we're going to really get to the scale where we'll be able to see our grandchildren dancing amongst flowers and smelling roses and listening to the songbirds.. And having delicious fish dinners and just enjoying, you know life as we have...