

Fu Jing

JUMPING TO REACH CLEAR SKY

FRONTLINE NARRATIVES OF
CHINA'S GREEN DREAM



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By Fu Jing

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Duan Xuzeng and Chen Xixi had their low-carbon wedding on bicycle parade with their guests in Luoyang City of Henan Province on Oct 3, 2010. (Asianewsphoto / Gao Shanyue)



Beijing middle school students are playing music by using the instruments made from recycling materials. (Asianewsphoto / Guan Xin)



The solar-power lights are installed on the streets of Jiangsu Province's Jiangyan City in the middle of 2010.
(Asianewsphoto / Luo Zhongming)



In Hubei's Yichang City, a residential community is equipped with energy-saving water heating system. (Asianewsphoto / Liu Junfeng)



Various electronic-cars bring low-carbon convenience. (Asianewsphoto / Wang Luxian)



A grass sprouts in the dry riverbed of Quanzhou, Fujian Province. (Asianewsphoto / Liu Tao)



Hurricane hits ships in coastal Fujian Province. Asianewspphoto / (Asianewspphoto / Liu Xianglong)



Typhoon hits the coastal city of Zhangpu in Fujian Province. (Asianewspphoto / Liu Xianglong)



Water is lifted by using wind power generators in Shangdong's Rizhao City. (Asianewsphoto / Chen Weifeng)



The walls have been covered by grasses in Huaibei of Anhui Province, which have let the room cooled. (Asianewsphoto / Kong Jun)



River is cleaned by using no-soil flower planting techniques in Guiyang of Guizhou Province. (Asianewsphoto / Zhang Jing)



Energy-saving lights powered by wind is put into use in Xinjiang. (Asianewsphoto / Liu Jian)



A solar-power house is built up. (Asianewsphoto / Liang Baohai)

PREFACE

Polish scientists recently predicted Europe might this year face the coldest winter in a millennium, mainly because of a decrease in warm air currents from Mexico. One European friend joked: "This (coldest winter) is because of the failure in Copenhagen."

Such is the widely held belief that the UN climate change negotiation in Copenhagen last year was nothing but a failure. There are two major narratives in Europe. One is that China was behind the failure. The other is that Copenhagen was a landmark event, heralding the decline of Europe's global influence. European Council President Herman Van Rompuy recently told a news conference: "When I took office eight months ago, visiting our capitals, I noticed frustration following the Copenhagen Summit. The perception was that the EU was sidelined." Some European scholars have at times labeled China as an "efficient negotiator" in Copenhagen, one with a "complicated mindset."

Facing mounting misperceptions and misunderstandings, I — as a journalist witnessing the efforts Chinese leaders, such as Premier Wen Jiabao, had delivered at Copenhagen to save the world from a "no-deal" scenario — could not help but include in the collection the true stories of what happened last November and December. This is also the starting point for the conceptualization of this book.

However, climate change is not merely a political negotiation affair. For many Chinese, especially those in ecologically fragile regions, it's a life-or-death issue. Unfortunately, I have only been able to include in this book pertinent stories I wrote before this year. In 2010, prolonged springtime droughts in Yunnan Province and Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, and summertime floods and rainstorms across the country left hundreds of thousands dead. People in these affected regions not only lost family but also were plunged into dire poverty overnight. A catastrophic massive mudslide triggered by rainstorms slammed Zhouqu County in Northwest China's Gansu Province on August 8, leaving 1,472 dead, 294 missing and more than 15,000 homeless. The poor farmers in Gansu I had visited before the Copenhagen summit told me, "The weather patterns are abnormal. We used to experience a rainy season from July to September, but now, all of the rainfall is concentrated into just one month. And most of the time, it's just one downpour a year, which means floods and landslides for us." Luckily, the government has stepped up reconstruction plans to assist the homeless in Zhouqu, and other regions and

villages. And thanks to its experiences in rebuilding the Sichuan earthquake zone, a new and improved Zhouqu will appear within three years.

Climate change doesn't necessarily mean temperature increases. In Sichuan, my home province, scientific data have shown there has been no temperature increase during the past five decades, although national and global average annual temperatures have been rising. However, the people of my hometown suffer from disasters again and again. There was the 2008 earthquake. Tongjiang County residents also suffered droughts in 2006. Floods and mudslides hit them in 2007 and returned this year. Many of my childhood friends and relatives suffer direly from the extreme weather and frequent disasters.

China's leadership has shown courage in facing the challenges and disasters. They have not only shown determination and assumed responsibility at the global level, but also recognized the severity of ecological disasters and natural catastrophes brought about by the abnormal weather. As the government is preparing the next five-year plan, I hope it can conduct a national survey to determine how many households are still living in ecologically fragile regions and incorporate this information into the plan's formulation. I sincerely hope there will be a time when no Chinese are killed by floods, droughts and landslides. As China is developing its economy through a heavy dependence on domestic consumption, satisfying the needs of its people should be put high on the government's agenda. This is an urgent driving force of its economy, given the sheer numbers of people living beside dangerous rivers or at the feet of fragile mountains.

To provide a broader understanding of climate change and its impact on China, I have also included in this book profiles of green thinkers, explanations of innovative ideas and considerations of relevant perspectives. Although climate change is more or less a scientific issue from its starting point, I didn't dig too deeply into the numbers in this collection, as my focus in previous years has been on the economic policies, negotiations, businesses, developments and international politics of climate change.

As this book goes to print, the UN is initiating the final round of negotiations in Cancun, Mexico. What the negotiations will bring about remains a question mark. However, I personally believe that

every country should integrate its domestic efforts into a low-carbon development blueprint. Meanwhile, the developed economies should accelerate the translation of their promises of financial and technological assistance as soon as possible. If the UNFCCC couldn't solve all the problems in one shot, it could at least resolve this issue — and do so urgently. And the United Nations can work with other international organizations, such as the World Trade Organization, to design other mechanisms to coordinate global efforts to tackle climate change. All the joint international commitments should be manifested through financial and trade tools, so their involvement at the early stage is prerequisite.

Now, I should come to long thank-you list. During my past 10 years of interviews, story writing and editing, I have greatly benefited from speaking with, and gaining insights from, numerous interviewees. These include, just name a few, Chinese Premier Wen Jiabao; former US vice-president Al Gore; UNEP executive director Achim Steiner; UNEP China country representative Zhang Shigang; Chinese-Canadian scientist Dr Robert Lao; New York-based Environmental Defense Fund chief economist Dr. Daniel Dudek and his Chinese colleague Dr. Zhang Jianyu; former WWF global policy advisor Dennis Pamlin; President of China Institute for Reform and Development Chi Fulin; head of National Energy Administration Zhang Guobao; and Tsinghua professors He Jiankun and Qi Ye. I have been impressed by the innovations I have been able to discuss with President of LongOn Group James Jao on his ideas of green building and with President of Sichuan Decision Chemical Company Peng Xiancheng on his green supply chain for his business partners. I have been fascinated to learn my journalism instructor, Renmin University Professor Zheng Baowei, has recently partnered with Oxfam Hong Kong to research China's climate change communications strategy. Zheng's trust has allowed me to become part of these efforts. Of course, I have benefited greatly, as I said before, from speaking with ordinary interviewees, such as farmers in Gansu. I am truly grateful for the climate change lessons you all have offered in the classrooms that are your everyday lives.

I would also thank the editorial team of *China Daily*, which has entrusted me with responsibility of coordinating energy and environmental reporting from late 2007 until mid-2009. It was in 2009 that I was sent to cover the G20 summit in London in April; then came to the UN summits in New York and the

G20 summit in Pittsburgh in September, and the Copenhagen summit in December. These international frontline encounters have provided me opportunities to sharpen my perspectives. These experiences are invaluable. And since this July, I was posted in Brussels, capital of the European Union, where I have totally transferred my attention from domestic issues to global affairs. Thank you, my bosses, for making my career shifts possible and experiences colorful. In addition, I would like to thank my colleagues for their long-term assistance in ensuring the smoothness of the interviews and writings.

I would also like to thank the strong team supporting the publication of this book. I would first like to thank Erik Nilsson, my American colleague at *China Daily*, for his patient and professional editing of this book's English version. Mind you, he has already set foot on nearly two-thirds of China's provinces, autonomous regions and municipalities. So, he knows China, and, of course, he knows Western readers. I wholeheartedly thank him again for the professionalism he has contributed to this book. Second, I would like to thank Wang Li and Li Yang for translating the English version into Chinese. Their expertise and better understanding of the content have made the Chinese version a very good read, indeed.

Finally, my sincere gratitude goes to editors Li Shujuan and Ge Wencong for their hard work and spirit of professionalism in publishing this book, and for their contributions to improving the understanding of China among those outside the country.

This collection will, of course, be imperfect. I accept all responsibility for any errors.

Fu Jing
In Brussels
November 9, 2010

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