

Regional Administrator Dennis McLerran
Opening Remarks as Prepared
2012 U.S.-Taiwan Sustainability Symposium:
Creating Sustainable Cities and Promoting Sustainable Ports in the Asia Pacific Region
December 10, 2012

Good Morning. Thank you for the warm welcome and introduction. Good morning, Mayor Chu Chen, Director Marut, Minister Shen Mayor Heartwell, and Vice Mayor Liu.

It is a pleasure to have the opportunity to help kick off this important conference and to be a partner in this important conversation on sustainability. I would like to thank our hosts and co-organizers, the American Institute in Taiwan, the Taiwan Environmental Protection Administration, and our esteemed colleagues from the Kaohsiung Environmental Protection Bureau and the City of Kaohsiung.

For the last 19 years, US EPA, the American Institute in Taiwan, and the Environmental Protection Administration in Taipei have collaborated to grow our capacities and protect our environments together. Today, we broaden our partnership more regionally, with colleagues from Kaohsiung City and the Taiwan Ports International Company, and officials from environmental, city, and port authorities from the US and Asia Pacific.

I am pleased that we are also joined by scholars and researchers from the US and Asia Pacific, non-governmental organizations, the C40, and industry. The people in this room come from many different organizations, many different professions, and many different perspectives. But we are all key stakeholders in this effort, and

are united by our desire to improve the world we live in – and not only the world we live in, but the world our children and grandchildren will live in as well.

The challenge ahead of us is unlike anything we have faced before – as individual economies or as one planet. For the first time in human history, we are beginning to see that everyday activities – the things we buy and transport, the way we keep the lights on, the ways we travel—have an impact on the health of our entire planet. For the first time in human history, more people are living in cities and urban areas than are living in rural areas. And over the next 30 years, most of the anticipated population growth is expected to happen in our cities.

As a result of all this, the years ahead will stretch the limits of our energy, our water, our environmental quality and ecosystems, and our food supplies. We will require not just new and sustainable power and water sources, but also the infrastructure to deliver reliable energy and clean water to billions more people. We will need affordable housing and sustainable transportation for people and products, as well as systems to address concentrated urban waste and pollution in the air and water. And last, but certainly not least, it will be essential to generate economic opportunities that ensure widespread global prosperity.

For the first time in human history, I believe we have the ability to meet all of these needs and build a sustainable future. We have the tools and the understanding, and we have the necessary commitment to global cooperation and collaboration.

It is a big task ahead of us. True sustainable development will demand the integration of our economic, social and environmental priorities. Our history shows us that without balance between these three things, we risk losing all three.

It is easy to feel overwhelmed by the challenges – poverty, conflict, climate change, loss of critical ecosystems – but it is important that we remember that sustainable development also provides great opportunities. We have opportunities to improve the lives and health of people locally and around the world. We also have opportunities for innovation, new technologies and enhanced collaboration.

Our gathering today in Kaohsiung to collaborate on creating sustainable cities and promoting sustainable ports and movement of goods is opportune. As cities grow in population and economic activity, so does the demand for energy, water, products, and transportation. Marine ports and vessels are integral components of the economic vitality of our cities as well as key factors in the environmental and human health in our port cities and far inland. Since the advent of containerized cargo and the development of the first container ports in 1962, with continued advancements in vessel technologies, we have enabled the rapid movement of large quantities of goods thousands of miles, from one part of the planet to another.

Asia Pacific is home to some of the busiest ports in the world, with their corresponding jobs and economic development, as well as the potential air quality, water quality, and public health impacts from emissions. Fortunately, all of us, from environmental agencies, to city planners, to product manufacturers and suppliers, understand that our economies and our environments are deeply interrelated. Around the world, ports, terminal operators, carriers and shippers have engaged in strategies to simultaneously advance environmental, economic and community sustainability.

We are all also aware that in order to meet today's challenges, we must work together to share our experience and expertise to jointly achieve sustainable growth

that integrates economic, environmental, public health, and social responsibility. For example, through public-private partnerships such as the US West Coast Collaborative, we have found strategies to cost-effectively reduce diesel emissions from port operations, vessels, trucks, and other mobile sources along the west coast of the United States. Since 2004, this Collaborative has worked with thousands of partners on approximately 500 projects, affecting over 20,000 engines, and reduced over 3,000 tons of particulate matter, over 40,000 tons of nitrous oxide and at least 1 million tons of carbon dioxide. This is equivalent to saving 2.1 million barrels of oil.

Over the next two days, we will hear from experts on science, research, city planning, energy, environment, policy, marine ports, vessels and goods movement. We will also hear more about cutting edge initiatives to bring stakeholders together to achieve sustainable cities, the initiatives in Taiwan and Kaohsiung, and the experiences in Grand Rapids, Michigan. As we consider the tremendous human experience and expertise gathered here today, I would like to note that all the cell phones, laptops and other devices in this room probably hold more computing power than the computers used by NASA in the early space program.

These advanced technologies have inevitably – and irrevocably – altered the way that we, and the organizations we represent, do business, the way we connect, the way we educate and so much else. Perhaps most importantly, the ability to use technology to reach across the globe has fundamentally changed the ways we consider each other. Today, the ability to hear, see and interact – in real time – with people and events across the planet has illustrated just how connected we all are. And it has motivated us to see our shared interests in the quality of life for people thousands of miles away.

I am honored to be part of this symposium and encourage you to visit back and forth between Forums A and B. Sustainable cities and Sustainable ports and vessels are vital to our overall sustainability. I encourage you to pose questions and share your ideas and experience during the discussions. Most importantly, I encourage you to join us in this regional dialogue in person, or through technology, to continue collaborating to implement today's solutions, and to jointly identify the next set of strategies. Through engagement of all stakeholders and continued collaboration we can make sustainable cities, ports, and movement of goods around the globe a reality.

Thank you.