

The Performance Theatre 2011
Remarks by Dr Osvald Bjelland, Vice Chairman and Founder

Opening ceremony, 16 June, Great Hall of the People

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen, eminent representatives of the government of the People's Republic of China. My name is Osvald Bjelland and I am Vice Chairman of The Performance Theatre.

A few days ago, Peter Voser, Shell's CEO, reminded us that, in just 20 years, fresh water demand could be 40% higher than supply. Shell has also told us that, in 2050, we could be facing a massive energy shortfall – equal to the entire energy industry's output in 2000.

When I arrived here on Sunday, I read in the China Daily that the world could have 10 billion people by the end of the century. Our food system, the article said, will have to double its output to feed all these people, something it will struggle to do.

None of us here in the Great Hall of the People can live for long without water or food, and none of us can live well without energy.

A red thread throughout these challenges is the rising temperature of our climate. There is 40% more carbon dioxide in the atmosphere than there was before the Industrial Revolution. We need to figure out how to grow without putting carbon dioxide into the air.

Otherwise, we are running towards a fall. As the philosopher Lao Tzu put it with simple but undeniable logic: if you don't change direction you'll end up where you're heading.

So what can we do to change direction?

Well, there are limits to what we can do. However, looking at history – from the UK-led Industrial Revolution and the US-driven IT revolution to the green revolution being spurred ahead here in China now – there is clearly much we can do.

We *can* actually change the way we power ourselves, the way we move around, the way we communicate, what and how we produce and consume goods.

The question is how we get this change going. To succeed we need to recognise that this isn't a challenge for parts of the globe – this isn't a developed or developing world quest. This is a challenge for all of us everywhere, from Detroit, Madrid and Athens to Cairo, Johannesburg and Mumbai.

I am certain that we are in the best place on earth to consider this challenge. Here – in China, in Beijing, in the Great Hall of the People – we are at the front-line of change.

On the one hand you have China's astonishing pace of GDP growth, the break-neck expansion of its cities, its multiplying world-class businesses. On the other, you have the country's recognition that quality of growth matters at least as much as quantity.

For if growth rushes forward in conflict with our environment, no matter how fast, no matter how explosive, it will eventually destroy itself.

“If you don’t change direction, you will end up where you are heading.”

Today and tomorrow, we will consider how we can avoid this fate. How can we change direction before we take a tumble?

- Led by Jeremy Bentham of Shell we will analyse the complex connections between food, water and energy.
- Under the direction of Anson Chan of The Bonds Group, we will consider how the world’s cities can be harnessed as a force for low-carbon growth.
- With Paul Polman of Unilever, the world’s leading consumer goods company, we will rethink our approaches to consumption.
- My friend Marco Alvera of eni will steer us through a careful consideration of the future price of oil.
- Professor Shi, whom I will introduce in a moment, will lead a session on the frontiers of green technology, hosted by Suntech Power.
- With Kai-Fu Lee we will tackle a subject that is very close to my own heart: how we instigate and sustain innovation in businesses and throughout the economy.
- And, with input from some of our foremost business leaders, we will debate the type of leadership we need to move these aims forward.

But to start, we will first take a look at the new Five-Year Programme, formally approved by the Chinese government earlier this year.

Before I introduce the opening ceremony’s eminent moderator and my colleague on this year’s organising committee, let me say a few words on the essence of The Performance Theatre.

Why is The Performance Theatre different? What are we all about?

- First, we are about connectivity – genuinely open face-to-face dialogue is the gold standard here. We are not about PowerPoint presentations.
- Second, we are about filling our minds and not the newspapers. We do not seek to produce a press-friendly outcome document or grand joint statement.

When I was 26 years old, I was in Kuala Lumpur and was very lucky to meet the late Dr Curt Nicolin, who was the founding chairman of ABB, the CEO of SAS and of SAF and of much else. He later became my mentor. Whenever I speak in front of an audience, I am reminded of how he was once asked to give a short speech. He was supposed to speak for 12 minutes or something like that.

He stood up and said:

“If I was 30, 60 or 90 years of age, I would look with optimism to the future. That way, we will all enhance our prospects for success.”

He then sat down.

Inspired by his words, and his brevity, I now give the floor to Professor Shi, State Councillor of the People’s Republic of China and President of the China Consulting Association, one of this year’s co-hosts.