

HKCML & CCCL Organized Online Conference on Addressing Climate Change in the Post-pandemic Era: A Global Perspective (30th Nov 2022)

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2 Dec 2022

Climate change is a significant environmental risk threatening the social, economic, and environmental sustainability of all states. Reduced resilience and reduced diversification of developing states' economies make them far more vulnerable to climate change risks.

On 30 November 2022, Hong Kong Commercial and Maritime Law Centre (HKCML) in partnership with the Centre for Chinese and Comparative Law (CCCL), hosted an online conference entitled “Addressing Climate Change in the Post-pandemic Era: A Global Perspective”. The conference included contributions on examining the problems decarbonization and energy transition pose and the ways efforts to optimize each sectoral approach can be coordinated and made more efficient. The discussion took place over four panels, each providing an insightful analysis of such questions and potential solutions to pressing problems.

The Conference started with welcome remarks by **Prof. Alexander LOKE (Director of HKCML)** and **Prof. Jiangyu WANG (Director of CCCL)**. They welcomed all participants and thanked the speakers for discussing their ideas. The conference organizers **Dr. Meng Mandy FANG (Assistant Professor, City University of Hong Kong School of Law)** and **Prof. Michael TSIMPLIS (Professor, City University of Hong Kong School of Law)** then explained the background and objectives of the conference, hoping the conference would promote and have a substantial impact on legal and policy developments.

The first panel – “Climate Change and Energy Transition” was moderated by **Dr. Dong LIANG (Assistant Professor, City University School of Energy and Environment)**. There were two speakers in this panel. **Dr. Philip Andrew SPSEED (Energy Studies Institute, National University of Singapore)** spoke on “Understanding the Heterogeneity of National Responses to the Low-carbon Energy Challenge”; and **Dr. Hao ZHANG (The Chinese University Faculty of Law)** gave a presentation on “China’s Carbon Neutrality Objective: Legal and Regulatory Arrangements Governing the Network-dependent Energy Industry”. Dr. SPEED explained the IPCC 6th Assessment Report to argue the structural factors including resource endowment, political system and ideas, values, and beliefs. He believed those factors could endure the

difficulties for developing countries. Dr. ZHANG first provided his analysis of China's carbon neutrality objective and contended that the current institutional arrangement in China's energy governance depends on the NDRC and NEA to carry out more active roles as regulators.

The second panel, moderated by Dr. Mandy FANG, was entitled "Climate Change and International Shipping" with two presentations. Prof. Michael TSIMPLIS discussed "Institutional obstacles in the decarbonization of international trade: The case of the IMO"; and **Dr. Regina ASARIOTIS (Policy and Legislation Section, Division on Technology and Logistics, Policy and Legislation Section, United Nations Conference on Trade and Development)** spoke on "Climate change adaptation for ports. A priority issue for developing countries". Prof. TSIMPLIS provided some international shipping facts and figures to the audience to introduce his topic. Dr. ASARIOTIS suggested some actions needed to ensure that 2030 critical transport infrastructure is climate resilient 2050, which will remain the key to achieving progress on many SDGs. She argued that we needed to improve data collection, plan early, adopt a systematic approach and avoid maladaptation or over-engineering from now on.

The third panel - "Climate Change and International Trade" was moderated by **Prof. Virginia HARPER HO (City University of Hong Kong School of Law)** and consisted of two presentations. Dr. Meng Mandy FANG spoke on "When Decarbonization Meets Industrialization: The First WTO Dispute Between the EU and UK" and **Dr. Hanok ASMELASH (Birmingham Law School)** presented on "The Regulation of Environmentally Harmful Fossil Fuel Subsidies: From Obscurity to Prominence in the Multilateral Trading System". Dr. FANG provided Measures relating to the allocation of contracts for differences in low carbon energy generation in the United Kingdom (UK-CfD (EU)) as background information. She suggested that not all forms of policy instruments blending decarbonization and industrialization would fail WTO's scrutiny. Therefore, in the UK's case, it is significant to identify the factors hindering the competitiveness of the country's lack of competitiveness in the offshore wind manufacturing industry and design solutions. Dr. ASMELASH first focused on explaining the energy subsidies in almost all countries around the world and pointed out the intergovernmental efforts to reform fossil fuel subsidies from 1992 to 2021. He argued there were a few challenges ahead, including defining fossil fuel subsidies, targeting harmful fossil fuel subsidies, enhancing transparency, and ensuring inclusivity.

The last panel - "Climate Change and Investment" was moderated by Prof. Michael TSIMPLIS. Prof. Virginia HARPER HO spoke on "Corporate Climate Disclosure Mandates: Implications for Corporate Governance (and the Planet)". Prof. HARPER HO explained the corporate climate disclosure mandates at first. She explained not only the implications for corporate governance but also the impacts and limitations of a post-carbon transition.

The seven presentations delivered during the four panels were informative and thought-provoking, and the group discussions following each panel's presentations were equally impressive. Insightful comments and questions were raised after each presentation which promoted further interactions between speakers and the audience.

The five-hour conference ended with the closing remarks by conference organizers Dr. Mandy FANG and Prof. Michael TSIMPLIS. Both thanked all the attendees for their time and contributions, as well as the speakers' excellent presentations and valuable contributions.

From Left to right:



Prof. Jiangyu WANG, Prof. Alexander LOKE



Prof. Michael TSIMPLIS, Dr. Meng Mandy FANG



Dr. Dong LIANG, Dr. Philip Andrews SPEED



Dr. Hao ZHANG, Dr. Regina ASARIOTIS



Prof. Virginia HARPER HO, Dr. Henok ASMELASH