

Honorary Doctor of Science

Professor QU Geping

Citations written and delivered by Professor CHENG Pei-kai

Chairman:

China is a country with a very long history. Since time immemorial, generations have thrived on the vast and fertile lands of China and have put down roots in this country. However, being gifted in abundance by nature is no guarantee of everlasting riches, as natural resources diminish in time. In the 20th century, this indelible law of nature was further assisted by a series of human and natural disasters, accelerating the depletion of the country's fast-shrinking resources. While our ancestors took pride in the breathtaking scenery of China — historically known as “a land of charm and beauty” — what we see today is a land full of scars and wounds.

Born in 1930, Professor Qu Geping is a native of Feicheng in Shandong Province. A graduate of the Shandong University, Professor Qu has served as Departmental Director of the Baoding Film Factory and Division Chief of the Chemical Industry and State Planning Commission. Professor Qu was also a member of the Chinese government delegation at the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment in Stockholm in 1972. Ever since then Professor Qu has devoted himself to environmental protection through direct involvement in the promotion, implementation and legislation of environmental protection projects in China. At a time when the public's environmental awareness was yet to be awakened, Professor Qu had already spearheaded a series of environmental protection and planning programmes to steer the society along the path of sustainable growth.

Recently Professor Qu has remarked about the experience of environmental protection in China and other countries. With reference to China's specific conditions, he put forward his theory on the complementary roles of economic development and environmental protection. On the one hand, he said, we need to create social wealth through economic development, so that the quality of both

human and natural resources can be improved. On the other hand, we have to prioritize sustainable growth as a long-term economic objective; environmental protection, therefore, is crucial. We should learn from the lessons of the West, where the “pollute first, treat later” mentality has brought about unforeseen and costly repercussions that are yet to be overcome by governments.

As Director of the State Bureau of Environmental Protection from 1982–1993, Professor Qu helped set the blueprint for environmental protection in China. Under his leadership, environmental policies met with huge success from initiation to consolidation. His achievements have fully embodied the three principles of “prevention,” “the polluter bears responsibility,” and “stronger environmental protection.” More important, Professor Qu’s efforts have successfully prevented the further deterioration of China’s natural environment during the economic take-off stage.

At the United Nations Rio Earth Summit in Brazil in 1992, Professor Qu was awarded the United Nations Sasakawa Prize. Attended by a total of 102 world leaders and senior government officials, the Rio Earth Summit was the most important conference on the future of the environment ever held by the UN. During the award presentation ceremony, Professor Qu was commended as “having made outstanding contributions to environmental protection in China. He has devoted himself to developing a strategy for the integration of environmental protection and economic and industrial development, which has involved environmental management, legislation, education, and industrial pollution prevention. Through public lectures, research, and publications, Professor Qu has raised the environmental awareness of the people of China. His contributions to environmental protection have set an excellent example for developing nations worldwide.”

In 1993, Professor Qu was elected a member of the Standing Committee of the National People’s Congress and at the same time became Chairman of Environmental Protection and Resources Conservation Committee of the NPC. In his new position, Professor Qu has strengthened the legislation and supervision of environmental protection in China. He has also worked closely with the mass media to enhance public awareness of environmental protection laws and regulations in order that China’s natural resources can be better preserved.

Today, Professor Qu's life-long commitment to environmental protection has borne fruit. His efforts and achievements in reviving the natural beauty of China remain unsurpassed.

Mr Chairman, now I present to you Professor Qu Geping for the degree of Doctor of Science, *honoris causa*.