

# CENTER OF STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT, THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

NEWSLETTER - DECEMBER, 2008

## CENTRE OF SEA FOR CHINA ESTABLISHED AT CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG

A new Centre has recently been established at The Chinese University of Hong Kong to promote strategic environmental assessment (SEA) and build capacity in impact assessment in China. The establishment of the Centre is timely and significant. China is facing a number of critical environmental and resources issues while grappling with double digit economic growth and significant regional disparity. The Centre has a two-fold mission:

- (1) to provide a platform for international agencies and SEA practitioners in and outside China to research and develop appropriate methods and practices for China, and
- (2) to enhance the effectiveness of SEA practices in China through institution and capacity building.

Strategically located in the Hong Kong SAR, the Centre has the advantage of providing the bridge between the East and West, multi-language ability, multi-cultural perspectives, and understanding of the Chinese and Western contexts. In collaboration with our Chinese and overseas partners, we have developed and will embark on a variety of research and capacity building initiatives in the coming few years.

## COOPERATION AND PARTNERING

### THE CHINESE UNIVERSITY OF HONG KONG AND NANKAI UNIVERSITY SIGNED COOPERATION AGREEMENTS ON STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT RESEARCH

A delegation from The Chinese University of Hong Kong led by Pro-VC Professor Jack Cheng and Dean Paul Lee visited Nankai University on 19 September 2008. Professor LAM Kin-che, Director of the Centre of Strategic Environmental Assessment for China (CSEAC) and Professor ZHU Tan, Director of the Research Centre of Strategic Environmental Assessment (RCSEA), signed the “Collaboration



Agreement on Strategic Environmental Assessment” on behalf of the two universities respectively.

The Department of Geography and Resource Management of CUHK and the College of Environmental Science and Engineering of Nankai University have a long history of collaboration in the field of environmental policy and management research, especially in environmental impact assessment (EIA) which is the strength of both parties. Over the years Prof. Lam and Prof. Zhu are leading experts who have made significant contributions to the development and practice of EIA in Hong Kong and mainland China respectively. Established in 2008 and 2004 respectively, CSEAC and RCSEA play a leading role in research and capacity building of SEA in China and the two centers will enhance their collaborative relationship through a variety of joint efforts as stipulated in the agreement.

### **MEMBERS OF THE CUHK CENTRE OF STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR CHINA VISITED THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION**

Professor LAM Kin-che, Director of CSEAC (third from right), and key members of CSEAC visited Ministry of Environmental Protection (MEP) in April 2008. They had an informal discussion with Mr. ZHU Xing-xiang (middle), Director General of the Division of Environmental Impact Assessment, MEP, and Dr. LI Tian-wei (first from left), the Associate Director in charge of Plan EIA. Mr. ZHU expressed support and encouraged CSEAC to capitalize on its advantage with a “mixed Chinese and Western, bilingual and multi-cultural characteristic” to provide a platform to facilitate dialog and interaction between Chinese and Western practitioners and capacity building. Other members joining the visit include Mr. Elvis AU (third from left), Chairman of the International Advisory Committee of CSEAC (third from left), Associate Director Professor CHEN Yong-qin (second from right) and Professor FUNG Tung, Assoc. Prov-VC of CUHK (second from left).



### **ESTABLISHMENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE OF THE CENTRE OF STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FOR CHINA**

The International Advisory Committee of the Centre of Strategic Environmental Assessment was established in mid-2008. Members of the Advisory Committee comprise leading experts in SEA research and practices from key international agencies, research institutions and universities. The International Advisory Committee will give advice in formulating the strategy, objectives and positioning of CSEAC.

#### **Chairman**

Mr. Elvis AU, Former President of International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA)

#### **Members**

Prof. Maria Partidario, Former President of IAIA, Professor of Instituto Superior Técnico, Portugal  
Dr. Hussein Abaza, Chief economist of United Nations Environment Program (UNEP)  
Prof. Lone Kornov, Aalborg University, Denmark  
Mrs. Linda Ghanime, United Nations Development Program (UNDP)  
Mr. Rob Verheem, Netherlands Commission for Environmental Assessment, Netherlands  
Prof. Lex Brown, Griffith University, Australia  
Dr. Jian Xie, Senior environmental specialist from World Bank  
Prof. Leonard Ortolano, Stanford University, US

## RESEARCH FELLOW

Dr. WU Jing joined the CSEAC in August 2008. She has an outstanding career in the teaching, research and practices in the field of EIA/SEA practices since 2000 and obtained a PhD in Environmental Science in 2005. She is currently Project Director of CSEAC.

## PUBLICATIONS

### “INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCE ON STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT”

Commissioned by the Appraisal Centre of Environmental Engineering of the Ministry of Environmental Protection, Professor LAM Kin-che, Director of CSEAC, and Mr. Elvis AU, Chairperson of the International Advisory Committee initiated a publication on the latest international development of SEA, encapsulating the key issues and showcasing key studies and good practices. With the assistance of Professor Maria Partidario and Professor ZHU Tan, the editorial board enlisted a number of experienced and accomplished experts in environmental impact assessment to provide insightful analysis of recent trends. This publication received the full support from Mr. PAN Yue, the Vice Minister of Environmental Protection, ZHU Xing-xiang (Director-General of the Division of Environmental Impact Assessment Mr and Dr. LI Tian-wei, Director in charge of Plan EIA. With the financial support of the Hong Kong Institute of Environmental Impact Assessment and CUHK, the publication was widely distributed to EIA/SEA practitioners in China. In June 2008, this book was revised and reprinted and is now downloadable from [http://www.grm.cuhk.edu.hk/en/research/5\\_public\\_08.htm](http://www.grm.cuhk.edu.hk/en/research/5_public_08.htm). Enquires and requests for paper-based version can be directed to Dr. WU Jing (e-mail: [wujing@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:wujing@cuhk.edu.hk)).



### TRANSLATION OF THE WORLD BANK BOOK “POLICY STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT: A TOOL TOWARDS BETTER GOVERNANCE

Commissioned by World Bank, CSEAC of CUHK in partnership with RCSEA of Nankai University have translated into Chinese the World Bank's most recent publication *Strategic Environmental Assessment for Policies: An Instrument for Good Governance*, edited by Kulsum Ahmed and Ernesto Sanchez-Triana. The book focuses on the application of SEA to policies with reflections on the lessons learned from previous cases and highlights of the strengths and weaknesses of current SEA methodology and practices. It also analyzes how policies are formulated and implemented and proposes a new conceptual framework for conducting SEA of policies that could potentially influence decision making and integrating with environmental policy formulation for sustainability. The translation and publication of this book is timely and significant. Since the implementation of the Environmental Impact Assessment Law (EIA Law) in the People's Republic of China in September 2003, a large number of SEAs of various types and for different sectors have been undertaken at the Plan and Programme level. At the moment, there is no statutory provision for the application of SEA to policies - which is arguably the most strategic level of the decision-making process. The development of SEA in China is now at a defining moment because a number of pilot experiments on EIA for policies have been completed, and the government is keen to learn from these pilot studies with the possibility of formally incorporating EIA for policies into the Law. This book, containing important lessons on how to enhance the effectiveness of SEA at the policy level, would be of great interest to policy makers, development planners and SEA practitioners in China. The book will be published by the China Environmental Science Press in the first quarter of 2009.

## ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

### SEMINAR: THE LEGAL SYSTEM OF INTERNATIONAL AND EUROPEAN STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

Hosted by CSEAC, a seminar entitled "The Legal System of International and European Strategic Environmental Assessment" was given by Assoc. Prof. Simon Marsden from the Law School of CUHK on Feb 27, 2008. Participants discussed on the significance, necessity, operating mechanism of SEA and the role of legislation. The seminar reviewed all the relevant SEA laws including treaties, international customary laws and "soft" laws, such as the Kiev SEA Protocol, Espoo Convention on EIA in a Transboundary Context, and Aarhus Convention on information transparency. The function of SEA in other environmental conventions, especially Ramsar Convention, the Convention on the Conservation of Migratory Species of Wild Animals, Convention of the Protection of World Cultural and Natural Heritages and Convention on Biological Diversity, was discussed during the seminar as well. The participants additionally discussed the status of SEA in the European legal system and analyzed the relationships between EIA Directive, SEA Directive, Habitats and Wild Birds Directives, Water Framework Directive, Public Participation for Plans and Programmes Directive and Structural Funds Regulations.

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## **LECTUR: THE PRACTICES OF SEA IN CHINA**

Professor XU He of the Research Centre for Strategic Environmental Assessment of Nankai University visited CSEAC in June and gave a seminar on “The Practices of SEA in China”. Professor XU systematically introduced the concept of SEA, the significance for China in carrying out SEA, the current development of SEA in mainland China, key knowledge of technologies in SEA and experiences of the pioneering SEA cases. He also predicted the direction for the development of SEA in China.

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## **PRESENTATIONS GIVEN BY DIRECTOR OF CSEAC**

- IAIA 2008 Annual Conference in Perth, Australia - Professor LAM Kin-che attended the IAIA 2008 annual conference in May and gave a presentation entitled “SEA in China: Challenges and Prospects”.
- Hong Kong Management Association - Professor LAM Kin-che gave a seminar to the Hong Kong Management Association in August 2008 entitled “Environmental and Sustainability Challenges of China and the role of SEA”.
- Hong Kong Institute of Environmental Impact Assessment - Professor LAM Kin-che gave a seminar on “SEA in China” for Hong Kong institute of Environmental Impact Assessment in September.

## **CAPACITY BUILDING**

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### **PROSTGRADUATE STUDENTS FROM NANKAI UNIVERSITY VISITED CUHK AND THE ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION DEPARTMENT OF HONG KONG SAR**

A group of 7 students and teachers from RCSEA of Nankai University visited CSEAC in August. The purpose of this visit was to finalize collaborative projects between the two sides and discuss the approach and methods of strategic noise assessment for mega-projects. The delegates took part in training on “CadNa/ A GIS noise model” and visited Hong Kong EPD to acquaint with the latest development of “3D noise environmental impact assessment model”.

## **FORTHCOMING ACTIVITIES**

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## **CHINA STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT FORUM: IMPLEMENTING THE EIA LAW IN CHINA—FIVE YEAR REVIEW AND PROSPECT**

Jointly organized by CUHK and Nankai University, a Symposium on “China Strategic Environmental Assessment: Five Year review and prospect” will be held from 27<sup>th</sup> Feb to 1<sup>st</sup> Mar in CUHK. Over 200 experts, scholars and practitioners in environmental impact assessment from mainland China, Hong Kong and other countries will gather in Hong Kong for the conference. In addition, some experts from international agencies and International Association for Impact Assessment will also attend.

In China, the concept of SEA was introduced in the early 1990s in China. Plan SEA was formally included in the EIA Law which came into force on 1<sup>st</sup> Sep, 2003. In the five years following implementation of the EIA Law, government and environmental protection authorities at all levels have strived to promote implementation of the EIA Law including the undertaking of Plan SEAs, institutional development, and capacity building. The EIA/SEA practitioners have yet to grapple with many issues, such as identification of key issues of concern, establishing an SEA effective system that can help China to put her development on sustainable path. The highlights of the symposium include a forum in which five key urban/regional SEA will be presented for discussion and a forum for the “Young SEA practitioners” in which the future and prospects of SEA in China will be discussed. Further details of the Symposium are available from the website <http://www.seaforum.net.cn/>, or from Dr WU Jing (e-mail: [wujing@cuhk.edu.hk](mailto:wujing@cuhk.edu.hk))

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## **2009 IAIA ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN GHANA: “SEA IN CHINA” SPECIAL SESSION**

The 2009 Annual Conference of IAIA will be held in May in Ghana. The Centre of Strategic Environmental Assessment for China of CUHK, the Research Centre of Strategic Environmental Assessment of Nankai University and the Appraisal Centre of Ministry of Environmental Protection have jointly set up a Special Session on “SEA in China: Practices, Experiences and Lessons”. In the last five years, over 500 SEA projects on various scales from different fields have been carried out in China. Some of them are pilot projects which can provide good cases and insights. The purpose of this session is to offer opportunities for policy makers, researchers and practitioners to interact.

Faced with increasing environmental pressure and resource constraints, China has accorded greater priority to sustainability issues in the formulation of national and regional development strategies. The Ministry of Environmental Protection is also keen to keep abreast with the latest development of SEA practices in the international arena. IAIA has previously assisted the Ministry of Environmental Protection in organizing EIA/SEA international conferences in 2004 and 2007. This Special Session in the IAIA Annual Conference will offer another opportunity for the exchange of experiences for Chinese and oversea practitioners. We cordially invite Chinese SEA practitioners and interested SEA practitioners and researchers from other countries to share their experiences and

reflect on the SEA process and practices. Additionally, the initial findings of a study on efficiency of SEA in China conducted by CSEAC will be announced.

Please refer to the following link for more details and you are welcome to register and submit paper to our session:

<http://www.iaia.org/modx/>