



Tzu Chi *Shines* in Paris Climate Conference

By Hsieh Ming-Fang



Nations Unies
Conférence sur les Changements Climatiques 2015
COP21/CMP11
Paris - Le Bourget

Bienvenue



Dr. Lin Ming-Nan, Vice Superintendent of Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital resonated with the quote by Dr. Maria Neira at the Paris Climate Conference “The biggest problems facing 21st century are the climate change and the environment. We must take preventative action now before it is too late.”

Let the Whole World Know - Tzu Chi's Effort on the Environment

From November 30 to December 11 of 2015, leaders from 150 countries as well as scholars and politicians from 195 countries gathered in Paris, France for the 2015 Paris Climate Conference,

better called the United Nations Climate Change Treaty (UNFCCC-COP21). About forty thousand people attended the conference with about six hundred meetings all together.

The goal of UNFCCC, the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, is to stabilize the greenhouse effect in the atmosphere to prevent catastrophe to human beings and the eco system. The Conference of the Parties (COP) has held meetings at different countries since 1995. The goal of 21st COP conference was to form a global climate treaty. It will be effective in 2020, so every country in the world will join the effort to fight global warming.



Taiwan Tzu Chi Foundation has been invited to United Nations Climate Conference for three consecutive years. During the December 1, 2015 press conference, Tzu Chi USA Vice CEO Tseng Tzu Huei (2nd to the right), Da Ai Television Weatherman Peng Chi-Ming (1st to the right), and Tzu Chi India representative Dr. Ding (2nd to the left), explained to the press about the Tzu Chi's ideas and actions on protecting the earth.



Since Taiwan does not belong to the treaty made up of the 195 countries and European Union, it has to use the name of a non-profit organization in order to participate at the Healthcare Climate Leadership Roundtable. Besides India, China, only two other medical teams, a hospital from Korea and the Taiwan Tzu Chi Medical Foundation, were invited to the Healthcare Climate Leadership Roundtable.

Vice Supt. Lin Ming-Nan and staff Ms. Gan Cai-Ru, of Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital, represented Tzu Chi Medical Foundation in sharing Tzu Chi effort to climate change. Dr. Lin said jokingly, “We are lucky to participate in the conference despite terrorists’ attack. We need to let the world know what Tzu Chi has done

to climate change.”

“We are grateful to our Dharma Master Cheng Yen! More than twenty years ago, she encouraged people to protect the environment with our own hands. In medicine, we have reduced energy consumption and carbon emission, and have made progress in environment protection. Therefore, we are able to participate in this conference.” said Dr. Lin confidently.

Climate Change Affects Health and So Medicine Must Reduce Carbon Footprint

During the 15th climate conference (COP15) in Copenhagen, some people were puzzled with the lack of participation from the medical field. Besides the declining polar bears population and the melting of the glaciers, people should focus more on the impact of chemical products to people’s health and the eco system.

The death toll due to climate change has escalated to the top five leading causes in many countries. The death toll due to air pollution is more than AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria combined. This year’s conference is the first focusing on climate change and health issues. Hosted by the HCWH (Health Care Without Harm), Dr. Lin and his colleague Gan Cai-Ru participated in



Dr. Lin Ming-Nan from Dalin Tzu Chi and representatives from 30 countries round table discussion on health promotion.



three-day round-table conference along with other world leaders.

During the conference, neck scarfs made from recycled plastic bottles, a product developed by the Da Ai Technology Company, were gifted to each participant. Their reaction was overwhelmingly positive and surprised. It warmed the hearts of participants in this cold weather in Paris.

A Magic to Purify the Air - Serving Vegetarian Meals in Hospitals

“When Dr. Lin Chin-Lon (now CEO of Tzu Chi Medical Foundation) was the supt. of Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital, not only did he give colleagues the environmental-friendly tableware, but also to all candidates who were being

interviewed for positions. Someone asked if it was worthwhile when new hires do not stay long enough? Dr. Lin Ming-Nan replied that it was worthwhile, because one can always use the environmental friendly tableware everywhere.” Thus, colleagues follow Dr. Lin’s lead to protect the environment.

CEO Dr. Lin Chin-Lon, a senior cardiologist, is a vegetarian himself so he encourages colleagues to become vegetarian. “The relationship between vegetarian and the environment” is the main theme for Dr. Lin Ming-Nan’s speech. Based on research studies, green-house gases produced with one kilogram of beef or meat is sixty or seventy times more as compared to vegetables such as carrots. In addition, the production of meat consumes large



amount of water, pesticides, fertilizers and energy, etc.

Vice Supt. Dr. Lin, specialized in Family Medicine and Health Promotion, said trees can absorb carbon dioxide. If we cut down trees in the rainforests for soy beans or corns, then carbon dioxide will increase. When we feed the pigs or cattle with beans or corns, these animals discharge more methane and therefore more green-house gases. Since the flocks of sheep or cattle are always in the thousands, the amount of green-house gases is tremendous. Moreover, meat production requires refrigeration and transportation which add to the carbon footprint and result in large amount of green-house gases.

Recently, research also indicates that eating red meat is one of the many factors in cancer.

The total number of vegetarian meals served at the six Tzu Chi hospitals in 2011 was 2,543,669, which resulted in the reduction of 2,439,396 kilograms of carbon dioxide. “As a matter of fact, our life style and eating habits affect the climate. To change the world, we need to begin with our eating habits,” said Dr. Lin. His report resonated with many leaders in the medical and health industries. Among those included Brenna Davis, department chair of sustainability from Virginia Mason Medical Center, and Mehesh Nakarmi, founder of the Nepal







Care Foundation. They were not aware that vegetarian diet could save energy and reduce carbon dioxide; both asked for additional information from Dr. Lin.

2020 Green Promise – Tzu Chi Won Golden & Silver Award

Tzu Chi Medical team and Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) have been long-term partners since 2010. Gary Cohen, founder of HCWH, has had many opportunities to work together on the environmental issues with Dr. Lin Chin-Lon, who is the chairman of Health improved hospital and environmental improvement committee network.

HCWH hopes to connect hospitals from all over the world to participate in the 2020 Health Care Climate Challenge initiated by Global Green and Healthy Hospitals (GGHH). Each hospital will focus on three directives: Mitigation, Resiliency and Leadership to find ways to improve climate change and to follow-up on members' pledges.

“Mitigation” is to find ways to reduce the carbon, whereas “Resiliency - disaster recovery” means hospitals will operate under normal operations in the event of extreme weather conditions such as drought, flooding, earthquakes and hurricanes; and “Leadership” means hospitals will be responsible to provide guidance on environmental

issues, including environmental friendly medical equipment, instruments, and medicine in their respective industries.

Prior to the climate summit, the network for hospital health improvement has had a series of conventions. CEO Dr. Lin reached an agreement with the medical teams from other countries to advocate vegetarianism. All six of the Tzu Chi hospitals committed to promote vegetarian diet for carbon reduction and nutrition. As a result, vegetarianism will contribute to improve the impact on climate change.

During the convention, a ceremony was held for the Health Care Climate Championship Award. Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital received gold and silver medals for leadership and Resiliency, respectively. Taichung Tzu Chi Hospital received a gold medal for Climate Resiliency, and a silver medal for the Guanshan Tzu Chi Hospital.

Hospitals Choose Local Produce to Reduce Carbon and Pollution

Climate change affects the whole world, and developing countries are worse than before with poorer and sicker people. Coastal countries and islands are threatened. The Summit is focusing on “Intended Nationally Determined Contribution” (INDC) in equanimity and fairness. Participating



Dr. Lin, holding the scarf made from recycled plastic bottles, discuss with Gary Cohen, Chief of HCWH.

countries agreed on the goals to truly reduce the energy and carbon, thus greenhouse gases in the coming years.

Sweden, promising to end fossil fuel by 2030 with 100% renewable sources, has already reached 72% of its goal. On the other hand, some wealthier countries will provide funding to the developing countries, and support the development of renewable energy. Dignity Health, the 5th largest medical system in the US with sixty thousand employees, has promised to end its investment in coal and fossil fuel related industries.

Perhaps some people think energy savings and the end to fossil fuel are the responsibilities of

governments; hospitals alone cannot solve environmental protection issues. However, Yen Tsai-Lu learned many actions taken by hospital are beneficial to the environment. For example, Dr. Davis from Virginia Mason Medical Center in Seattle, Washington, shared many stories that not only cut energy, water and electricity consumption, but also reduced medical waste. They organized farmers' market and promoted organic food. Her report showed through teamwork hospitals can lead to make a difference on climate change. Mason Medical Center appealed to big businesses to sign-up for the Washington Business Climate Declaration. Businesses



pledge to support energy efficiency, invest in renewable energy, and reduce greenhouse gas emission, thus helping to solve the negative impact on climate change.

Individuals' Environmental Protection Reduce Energy Consumption from a Move

“The action is small, but the benefit is big. As long as everyone has the

concept to protect environment, we can all make the right choice for our daily lives. For example, I choose vegetarian diet, bring my own tableware, and walk as much as I can, etc.” Tzu Chi fulfilled this pledge. Ms. Gan wishes the Tzu Chi Medical Foundation will discontinue the disposal of medical waste by incineration. Other than reducing energy usage from the source, we can also find better ways to manage the process. We will make more improvement in Taiwan.



Dr. Lin thanks Tzu Chi's volunteers from Paris for their support and assistance during the Paris conference.

Seeking Vegetarian Diet, One Step to Stop Climate Change

“To be frank, I was lazy at first, so I ate at the hospital’s cafeteria which led me to be vegetarian,” said Dr. Lin Ming-Nan. Lin was not a vegetarian when he first started at Dalin Tzu Chi Hospital, occasionally, he would eat meat in his in-laws’ house.

Since the formation of Taiwan Nutrition Association for Vegetarian on March 14, 2009, Dr. Lin became a vegan. He had opportunities to read some of the literatures and also did some researches on vegetarian diet. He found the benefits to the health and environment which strengthened his belief on vegetarianism. Now his whole family is on vegetarian diet.

In 2010, Lin assisted the establishment of Health Improvement Hospital International Network committee. Since then, he continuously championed for vegetarian diet, participated at the medical and health environment plans and meetings. He shared the aspects and benefits for vegetarian diet. Vegetarian diet is one of the features for Tzu Chi, and is also beneficial to the health. Lin’s effort was recognized by the medical field. However, everyone agreed the difficulty to promote vegetarian diet in the hospital. But Lin

encouraged his colleagues’ to take one step at a time; once a month, and then once a week on vegetarian diet. One day the goal of reducing the carbon by becoming a vegetarian will be fulfilled.

“There are 7 billion people on earth, if everyone is on vegetarian diet once a week, which translates to 1 billion people on vegetarian diet. Then carbon will be reduced by 14%.” Moreover, the use of environmental friendly tableware will reduce the consumption of water and electricity. Lin emphasized individuals simple living can improve the climate.

“Dharma Master Cheng Yen said environmental conservation begins at the origin, everyone is a source and don’t underestimate individuals’ power. If everyone can reduce carbon and lower personal desires, then it is a source approach.”

References

<http://www.cop21paris.org/about/cop21>

<http://e-info.org.tw/taxonomy/term/41529>

http://twycc.org.tw/blog_and_news/8625/cop21-paris-twycc-recruitment/

<http://www.cop21.gouv.fr/en/a-short-glossary/>

<https://noharm.org/>

<http://greenhospitals.net/>