

To the Taoist Association of China and the China Religious Culture Communication Association

My Dear Taoist friends,

I send my warmest congratulations to you on this special occasion celebrating the Fifth International Taoism Forum. It is hard to believe how quickly the years have passed since I first discovered the profound wisdom of Taoism. Yet here I stand today, nearing the century mark, filled with gratitude for the guiding light it has been.

I can still vividly recall my first encounter with Taoism in 1979 during a visit to China's Taiwan. I was introduced to the thinking of Lao Zi and Zhuangzi and had the honor of visiting the Longshan Temple, where I stood before a magnificent statue of Guanyin. Her compassionate presence has stayed with me to this day. Even now I have a beautiful wooden Guanyin statue at my home in Amsterdam, continuing to watch over me in silence.

From that initial spark of connection, my relationship with Taoism slowly but profoundly deepened over the decades. As I learned more of its teachings on unity, compassion, and harmony with nature, Taoist philosophy became embedded in my spirit. When the economic miracle of the Far East threatened ecological balance, I felt called to take up the mission of harmonizing economy and ecology. The Taoist principles of unity between heaven, earth and humanity illuminated the path towards ecological awareness and action. This inspiration led me to publish "The Transformation Factor" in 1986, with the aim of spurring ecological consciousness.

It was a gift from above when in 2004 I was invited by the Alliance of Religions and Conservation to participate in reviving the Tiejia Taoist temple and building an ecological education center on Taibaishan. That same year, when my eldest daughter Anneke passed away from cancer at just 49, I was granted the honor of donating the temple's incense burner in her memory. Seeing the inscribed vessel with her name at my hotel in Xi'an for the first time brought me to tears. In the years since, I have visited the temple site with family, cherishing those meaningful moments.

My bonds with the Taoist community deepened. Beyond the personal solace it provided, Taoism also contains an ethical framework that could help restore balance between humanity and nature. With this belief, my foundations - the Ecological Management Foundation and Valley Foundation - became involved in supporting the groundbreaking effort of creating a Taoist Ecology Temple Network. Through the Taoist community's

efforts, temples become hubs for ecological education, sustainable agriculture, conservation, and spiritual nourishment. Taoism's ascendant place in China also means this call for ecological awareness can spread far and wide.

I was delighted to learn that building ecological temples has become national policy. As one of the largest and most influential nations, China's initiative to integrate Taoist ecological teachings into policy sets a bold and innovative global example. It gives me great faith that with shared dedication, we can walk the path towards a sustainable and harmonious future.

In closing, I wish to express my deep gratitude for the privilege of working alongside my dear Taoist friends Master Ren Farong(deceased), Master Zhang Gaocheng, Master Yang Shihua, Master Ren Xingzhi, Professor Fan Guangchun and many others who made Taoist harmony with nature a movement and moral compass. As ecological crises mount worldwide, China's leadership and the Taoist community's role have never been more crucial. I sincerely hope your efforts in the years ahead help steer humanity towards a sustainable and ecologically sound future. Please know an old friend walks with you in spirit on this journey.

My very best wishes as you gather to celebrate the achievements thus far and strengthen our collective dedication to advancing ecological awareness and sustainability, moving forward together in the years ahead!

Sincerely yours,
Allerd Stikker,
Founder of EMF and Valley Foundation



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