

GIN2004: 12th International Conference of the Greening of Industry Network. November 7-10, 2004, Hong Kong

Opening remarks by Kurt Fischer, GIN Co-founder and GIN-Americas Coordinator

Partnerships for Sustainable Development

It is my pleasure to welcome you all to the Greening of Industry Network, and to thank Peter Hills, Director of Corporate Environmental Governance Programme at the University of Hong Kong, the conference secretariat, Richard Welford as conference chair, and the many staff members led by Ms. Eva Poon, all of whom have done such an outstanding job of bringing everything together for us to enjoy in learning, exchange, discussions, and good fellowship.

Our 2004 theme is Partnerships for Sustainable Development. The Partnership theme is basic to GIN. Our Vision statement begins this way:

The Network seeks to create new concepts and a new language that will make it possible to extend our horizons and communicate across disciplines, nations, and sectors.

We believe that by learning from each other, by taking in different perspectives -- in short -- by forming partnerships, we move closer to achieving sustainable development. Exploring the potential of partnerships, understanding their merits, discussing the barriers to building effective partnerships, and planting the seeds for new and creative partnerships: these are the goals of this conference.

I am often asked just *what is* the Greening of Industry Network?!

The Network an international association of individuals, open to all, from academia, business, civil society organizations, and government, dedicated to building a sustainable future.

The organizational answer is that GIN is a consortium of three university programs, at Chulalongkorn University, at the University of Twente, and at Clark University. So while I am up here on my own at the moment, I by no means work alone: I want you to meet my colleagues and partners, Somporn and Theo from GIN-Asia and GIN-Europe.

The three of us work cooperatively to pursue the Network's mission, guided by an international planning board of forty members structured into four working groups, on conferences, publications, membership, and action projects. Many more have join as members in a new program started in 2003, about 500, and we correspond with 3,000 more around the world.

That's the structural answer. But the description I like best is that the Greening Network is like a *comet*: it appears at regular intervals, sighted in various parts of the world. First appearing in the Netherlands in 1991, it came around next in 1993 in Boston, then annually, sighted in Copenhagen, Toronto, Heidelberg, Santa Barbara, Rome, Chapel Hill, then 2001 in Bangkok we took up the challenge of *Sustainability at the Millennium*, followed by Gothenburg and San Francisco, and now here we are in Hong Kong in 2004.

But a comet does not disappear just because you cannot see it: a comet goes on its way and goes about its work. The three of us Coordinators confer daily, the Working Groups formulate our plans, project hosts and sponsors like the University of Hong Kong take up GIN activities, and thousands more follow us in cyberspace.

What is a comet made of? Ice and vapor and particles. But GIN is made of people and the partnerships that bind them. Comets and GIN both are intriguing and inspiring to many.

When we started our planning for the Network 14 years ago, we aimed to create a global forum, cutting across national, professional, and disciplinary boundaries, to further our understanding of the challenges of sustainable development, and to forge sound connections between research and policy and strategy and actions for industrial transformation.

We hoped to create a core group of about 200 individuals to take up the challenge, and to effect change within their own fields and their own institutions. The "200" changes somewhat from time-to-time and from place-to-place.

And now, in 2004, at this moment, *you* are the 200. *You* are the comet. *You* are the Greening of Industry Network.

