

Speech of Professor Nelson Chen, Director, School of Architecture, CUHK (27.11.2014)

Professor Fung, Ms Fisher, honoured guests and students:

Let me add my congratulations on the opening of this important exhibition on “Climate Change and its Impact” – the first themed exhibition of the Museum of Climate Change (MoCC) so generously supported by the Hong Kong Jockey Club.

I am pleased that our School of Architecture is a co-supporter together with the Institute of Environment, Energy and Sustainability (IEES) and, of course, the Jockey Club. I am hopeful it will be just the first of many more collaborations together in the future.

The School of Architecture at CUHK is fully committed to environmental and sustainable design in our teaching programmes. We emphasize the need to work with nature, not against it, and that the most beautifully designed buildings and structures are, in fact, performance-based designs. Perhaps Oscar Wilde described it best when he said, “I have found that all ugly things are made by those who strive to make something beautiful, and that all beautiful things are made by those who strive to make something useful.”

With this aim of designing environmentally responsive and responsible architecture, that is both useful and beautiful, our School has a dedicated master’s degree programme in Sustainable and Environmental Design, which recently celebrated its 10<sup>th</sup> year anniversary. It is led by our Professor Edward Ng, who is one of the programme leaders of IEES.

As most of you know, our architecture programme is housed in AIT Building across the street. What you may not know is that it is the first HK BEAM Gold Award sustainably designed building on the CUHK campus. On top, there is a green roof garden for a self-initiated rooftop cultivation project, and we recently invited students and staff throughout the university to join in urban farming activities in cooperation with the Campus Planning and Sustainability Office. In fact, our first harvest is expected next week.

Finally, let me end by noting that all our current environmental challenges are not new, but only that public awareness is belated in the realization that we are all collectively responsible for climate change. A generation ago, there was an architect, inventor and visionary named Buckminster Fuller - renowned for his innovative thinking and understanding of the world’s environmental problems. He was a mentor to several important architects including Norman Foster, as well as Prof. Tunney Lee, who founded our School of Architecture 24 years ago. Bucky Fuller, as he was popularly called, published a book in 1968 under the title “Operating

Manual for Spaceship Earth” which identified the essential need not to exploit and over-rely on fossil fuels. He wrote:

*“We are not going to be able to operate our Spaceship Earth successfully for much longer unless we see it as a whole spaceship and our fate as common. It has to be everybody or nobody.”*

He also concluded: *“Human beings always do the most intelligent thing. But, only after they have tried every stupid alternative, and none of them have worked.”*

So, exhibitions at the MoCC such as this one on “Climate Change and its Impact” are essential to help point the way to intelligent solutions for all of us. It has to be everybody or nobody. Again, my warmest congratulations on the opening of this exhibition.