

## Tianshan Award for foreign experts



Awarding Ceremony by Department of Human Resources of the Xinjiang Government



“Old friends / family picture” at the end of the awarding ceremony

From the left to the right:

- Jiaerheng Ahati, President of Xinjiang Academy for Environmental Protection Sciences and Chinese Coordinator of the “RECAST Urumqi” Project
- Dr. Thomas Sterr, Dept. of Geography of Heidelberg University / Head IUWA Heidelberg and general project network coordinator “RECAST Urumqi”
- Dr. Dong, Ping, Director General for international relations of the Department of Science and Technology of the Xinjiang Government

**Tianshan Award for foreign experts**



**天山奖**  
**Tianshan Prize**

**新疆维吾尔自治区人民政府**  
**The People's Government of the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region**





## 天山奖

为表彰在自治区经济和社会发展中  
做出的突出贡献，授予托马斯·施戴尔  
先生2015年度新疆维吾尔自治区外国专  
家“天山奖”，特发此证。



二〇一五年六月十三日



## **Tianshan Award**

The  
2015 Tianshan Award  
Is Presented to **STERR THOMAS MICHAEL**  
For

Your Great Contributions to the Economic and Social Progress of  
xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region of China.

13<sup>th</sup> Jun 2015

## Official speech

### on behalf of the recipients of the Tianshan Award for Foreign Experts

*(Thomas Sterr)*

Dear president / delegates of XFEB

Standing here today in front of you in the context of receiving the Chinese Tianshan Award for Foreign Experts is an exceptional and very great honor for me, and I guess that the same holds true for the other 5 award winners, namely Steven Matthew Niemi, Tsutomju Sumimoto, Zhyrgal Ismalilova, Youngtae Yoo and Lan Hai Li.

Indeed, China as well as Xinjiang show big interest in the intensification of international exchange in basic and application oriented research, education, technological development, economic exchange, sports and many other domains, and a growing number of highly skilled, capable and enthusiastic experts come to this place and provide their specific contributions to our common goals.

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Speaking for all the 6 winners of the Tianshan Award, we are especially thankful, that the selection committee of XFEB honored the specific engagement of the 6 of us as convincing representatives of these domains of international collaboration, and I guess, I can also speak for my honorable colleagues, when I hereby express, that we understand this award not only as a recognition of what we already have achieved until now, but also as a personal stimulus to further deepen our fruitful exchange with local experts of Urumqi, Xinjiang and China.

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In my case, I can look back now on 10 years of earnest, challenging and fruitful collaboration with leading representatives of various political and scientific institutions of Xinjiang, which were involved in an application-oriented research project, that was funded within the future megacity program of BMBF, the Federal Ministry of Research and Education of Germany, at an amount of about 3 Mio Euro, as well as by various local institutions, who also got substantial financial support on the Chinese side.

When I now hold this award in my hand, I hold it for at least 50 knowledgeable and enthusiastic scientists and experts from Urumqi/China and from Heidelberg/Germany, and the collaboration among us was so intensive, that I could instantly name 50 persons one by one, not only on the German side, but also in the Chinese side, if I had time to do so.

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During 10 years now, we are in intensive collaboration between Urumqi/Xinjiang and Heidelberg / Germany among scientists, politicians as well as business representatives, and also in a mixture between them.

The collaboration was very much focused on the preparation, pre-phase and main phase of our research project “RECAST Urumqi – Meeting the Resource Efficiency Challenge in a Climate Sensitive Dryland Megacity Environment – Urumqi as a Model City for Central Asia”.

- The project, which was implemented between 2008 and 2014.
- It focused on energy efficiency with a special emphasis on low energy buildings, leading to the realization of Xingfubao, as the first passive house on the Chinese silk-road, and a successful low energy oriented transformation of the Agricultural Training Center in Nanshan to a low-energy building.
- It focused on materials efficiency, with a specific emphasis on circular economy, with the Sino-German development of a sustainability oriented waste management software for industrial enterprises
- and it focused on water related challenges, with a specific emphasis on water scarcity and resource saving urban water management, leading to the development of models, recommendations and tools, which can support decision makers for water management, in finding locally adapted water saving solutions, which could decrease the problem of absolute water scarcity and potentially related economic, political and social conflicts.

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All of these successes would not have been possible without various combinations of best fitting partners, for which the Xinjiang Academy for Environmental Protection Sciences took very much care, and in this respect I cannot prevent mentioning the name of Jiaerheng Ahati, who had already been a central stability factor from his initial position at the Environmental Protection Department (EPD) of Xinjiang Government, before he was promoted to act as the president of XJAEPS, which allowed him to intensify his efforts to expand and further develop our Sino-German collaboration in various fields.

Apart from him, I also have to mention Dr. Zhao Chenxi, vice director of this academy, who cared very much about the organization of a high-ranking EU delegation visit in Urumqi in June this year, which was initiated by Mrs. Kundermann, the German counsellor for Science and Technology in Beijing, and which was guided by Mr. Bochereau, the European counsellor for Science and Technology in China.

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When we started our scientific cooperation with CAS Xinjiang in 2005, our German professors from Heidelberg University recommended very much to base it on Professor Dr. Zhang Xiaolei as our scientific advisor.

Meanwhile, Zhang Xiaolei was promoted to act as the director general of the Department of Science and Technology of the Xinjiang Government. Due to his specific interest in our collaboration, we never lost him until today, and we are very impressed and thankful for his continuous advice and support.

Moreover, I have to express my special thanks to a broad range of leading political partners and advisors from Xinjiang, such as Nuer Baikeli, Nuerlan, Hanibati, Erken-Tuniyaz, and Li Hongbin, to name only a few of them.

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As a representative of the University of Heidelberg, which is not only the oldest university in Germany (\*1386), but also one of the most renowned so-called “universities of excellence”, it was a great pleasure for me, to promote sustainability oriented research activities within a symbiotic collaboration between leading actors from politics, science and economy, - both in Germany and Xinjiang, within the RECAST Urumqi project, and I am very much willing to further develop these fruitful and further promising relations to the benefit of the people of Urumqi and Xinjiang.

Sustainability oriented research on future megacities in combination with the realization of showcases, the development of appropriate tools and related capacity building, are major prerequisites for a stable and sound improvement of living conditions of citizens, and the sustainability oriented activities within the RECAST Urumqi projects are not only a key factor for better health or wealth of individuals, they are a key element for the promotion of a harmonious society and a multi-ethnic and multi-cultural cohabitation of people in a peaceful environment. We hope, we also could and can further contribute to this by our collaboration.

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Within the last 10 years, which I now collaborate with my good old friends in Xinjiang, Urumqi got my Asian home.

Moreover, I found a new personal brother, Jiaerheng Ahati, I found Dong Ping, and many more.

Within these 10 years, my German colleagues and I got extremely enriched by the various exchanges and experiences we could make in your country, not only based on scientific or business oriented collaboration, but also on Xinjiang’s peoples’ culture, habits, thoughts and personal feelings,

and I guess, the same is true for my awarded colleagues.

Based on this, I guess we somewhat lost our heart for Xinjiang and its people, which is why we feel responsible to further promote our collaboration with your country, and act as ambassadors.

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By decorating us with the Tianshan Award for Foreign Experts, you put us in such a position, and we take this honor also as a premature praise for further action.

I am convinced, that the Tianshan Foreign Experts Award, you handed over to us today, will help all the 6 of us and a whole network of experts and friends behind us, to facilitate our earnest and passionate efforts to bring Xinjiang forward, and at least in our Sino-German case: to meet the extraordinary challenges of Urumqi regarding its environmentally sensitive location.

The slogan "to make Urumqi a green city" has not been expressed by one of our scientists, it has been expressed by Dr. Thomas Fischer, the general representative of the Xinjiang branch of Volkswagen Group China, whose company needs to attract highly competent experts from all over the world to live here in Urumqi with their families, if the Volkswagen branch in Urumqi wants to increase its competitiveness and further develop its potentials as a valuable regional job creator.

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Due to its specific richness in natural resources on one hand, and the ecologically sensitive environment, in which the city is embedded, heaven and hell are very closely interlinked here, and the multi-ethnic composition of the population of Urumqi and Xinjiang provides further chances and challenges.

For all these reasons, a systemic-oriented understanding, connection and responsibility is especially required, in order to guide Urumqi and Xinjiang towards a healthy and peaceful future for its children and grandchildren.

The challenges, which your city and country has to meet, may appear extraordinary big, but the same is true for its potentials.

So, if Urumqi and Xinjiang succeed here, it will also attract worldwide attention in this respect. Only yesterday evening, I spoke with my good Chinese brother Jiaerheng Ahati about an international conference on future city development, which I want to promote on the German side to take place in Urumqi at the beginning of next year, in order to further increase the international attention for Urumqi, and to further support the development of sustainability oriented strategies, that might turn Urumqi into a model city for green development in semi-arid lands.

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Distinguished heads of the Department of Human Resources and the Xinjiang Foreign Experts Bureau of the Xinjiang Government,

all the skills, achievements and expectations you decorated today, represent well selected contributions to an ecologically, socially and economically sound development on the long run,

and with further support from you, the people and decision makers of Xinjiang, the six of us are surely able to add next success stories, here in Urumqi, in Xinjiang, and in China.

Even if it might be small contributions, they might contribute very fruitfully to the reestablishment of Urumqi and Xinjiang as an international bridge-building platform for Eurasian trade, new ideas, technological development, as well as cultural variety and exchange, as this had already been the case during the times of the old silk road.

Moreover, due to its intrinsic potentials, as well as due to massive financial support from the Chinese government within its Go-West strategy, Urumqi has the chance to transform the special severity of its challenges into a sustainability oriented model for city development in arid lands, and I hope very much, that sustainability oriented regional planning on the countryside of Xinjiang might be successful as well, in order to promote further growth-poles in your province and to decrease population pressure on its capital.

Based on such a two-fold sustainability strategy, I am convinced, that Xinjiang and Urumqi will be able to strengthen their position not only in an economic sense, but also as sustainability oriented role model for Central Asia, and well beyond.

Thank you.