

Turning to the current situation, Wang Ming said that with the emergence of market reforms, the government monopoly on social resources is gradually loosening. The government is withdrawing from some social welfare fields, making space for NGO growth. He also said that the Chinese traditional spirit of mutual help, philanthropy, and social responsibility bodes well for future development of Chinese NGOs. Several factors also contribute to the need for a strong NGO community in China:

- the growing size of China's population challenges the government's capacity for exclusive governance
- mounting problems related to the environment and natural resources can not be addressed by the government alone
- poverty and other social issues could be more effectively addressed through NGOs.

In conclusion, Wang Ming reminded the participants that the relationship between NGOs and the government in China is not as antagonistic as in Korea, the Philippines, or Japan. However, there are several challenges facing Chinese NGOs in the future:

- special/dependent relationship with the state
- lack of funds
- lack of capacity
- defects in the legislation system.

John English (University of Waterloo) presented the Canadian experience with trying to negotiate a code of conduct for Canadian companies. The government of Canada approached him in 1998 about the possibility of being the facilitator in discussions aimed at developing a voluntary code of conduct between, on the one hand, the apparel and related sectors and, on the other hand, labour and NGOs. His appointment came on the heels of a growing pressure on the part of Canadian NGOs on the Canadian government, and Minister Axworthy in particular, to create a Task Force on Sweatshops.

The need to address sweatshop practices abroad and at home had to be squared with the promise made to developing countries in trade negotiations, namely that the World Trade Organisation's Agreement on Textiles and Clothing would lead to phasing out of the import quotas established under the Multi-fibre Arrangement (1972). These pressures also mounted with the backdrop of rapidly falling Canadian employment in the textile and clothing sector. At the same time however, Canadian exports saw a dramatic increase due to the success of "high end" products (despite the growth in imports). While the government was becoming more attentive to human rights by 1996, the policy at the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade was not, to the satisfaction of the influential president of the Business Council on National Issues (BCNI), Thomas d'Aquino. Despite the scepticism of the BCNI, other business groups and leaders were becoming more attentive to the issue of corporate social responsibility. The momentum was gathering for the establishment of the Task Force as placards drawing attention to the issues became more common, conferences abounded, and shareholder activists began to bother company presidents at annual meetings.