



## **12<sup>th</sup> World Bamboo Congress**

**Taiwan, 18-22 April, 2024**

[www.worldbamboo.net](http://www.worldbamboo.net)



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### **Opening Ceremony**

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Ladies and gentlemen, dear bamboo friends,

After a long journey, a long wait, here we are... We are here in Taiwan to celebrate the twelfth World Bamboo Congress.

First and foremost, I would like to express my gratitude to an amazing Taiwanese woman who played a crucial role in organizing this bamboo gathering. She is the founder of the Taiwan Bamboo Society, the one who came up with the brilliant idea of having World Bamboo Ambassadors, and she is one of them. She also possesses the art of narrating remarkable stories... I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Lifang Tang and her team.

I would also like to extend my gratitude to Professor Pei-Hsien Hsu and Hsinshu University for providing us with excellent accommodation for our bamboo celebration and coordinating the architectural Bamboo Expo.

Another remarkable woman has deep knowledge and understanding of bamboo. She has published a fascinating book on bamboo medicine and nutrition. She spent months selecting the best scientific communications as the Chair of the 12WBC Technical Committee. I want to express my gratitude to Nirmala Chongtham and her team from Chandigarh University.

I would also like to thank a Bamboo Pioneer who is well acquainted with the long history of the World Bamboo Congress. He was present at the first congress in Mayaguez, Puerto Rico in 1984, and he organized the second congress in the Bambouseraie of Prafrance in southeastern France in 1988. I was there too, in that fantastic bamboo park. As a journalist, walking through the long bamboo alley on a bright sunny morning in June, I fell in love with bamboo. I am grateful to Yves Crouzet for giving me the opportunity to follow in his footsteps by passing on the flag of the European Bamboo Society.

Thanks to this, following the international bamboo encounter in Chiang Mai, Thailand in 1991, I went to Minamata, Japan in 1992. There, in the bamboo park, situated on a reclaimed bay following one of the first major pollution disasters, bamboo participants declared their intention "to build bamboo bridges all over the world" to promote the use of bamboo. It was there that I met a brilliant and dynamic woman, who is now the key person in the WBO: Susanne Lucas.

Together, we have traveled to Bali, Indonesia, to San Jose, Costa Rica, to Delhi, India, to Bangkok, Thailand, to Antwerp, Belgium, to Damyang, South Korea, to Xalapa, Mexico... A fantastic "building bridges company", completely independent, driven by enthusiastic and determined women and men, acting everywhere to research, plant, develop, teach, share, and collaborate, with a small budget but an extraordinary ability to inspire enthusiasm and motivation. I extend my gratitude to all the representatives from these countries who honor us by joining and contributing to the success of this event.

And today, after this long journey, after the waiting time due to the pandemic, after connecting with different and numerous representatives, we are ready to discover, to share, and to build more bridges, more connections, and more future perspectives.

But before anything else, let me address a question that I have frequently encountered: Why did we choose Taiwan? To this valid question, there is a simple answer. Taiwan is as resilient as bamboo. Well-rooted, with a deep and extensive rhizome, flexible in the face of strong winds, releasing abundant oxygen and storing a significant amount of carbon. Taiwan offers a proposition of well-being for sustainable and balanced development.

In fact, Taiwan has a long history with bamboo. Through the works of a French anthropologist, Josiane Cauquelin, who studied the Puyuma people, an Austronesian-speaking community living

in small villages in the plains of Taitung, I discovered that part of their population originated from an ancestral couple "native to bamboo". The family house played a vital role, structuring the life of the community. A kind of bamboo shaman, known as the "bamboumancian", predominantly a man (as, according to the Puyuma, bamboo speaks to men), would interpret signs using divinatory bamboo sticks. They possessed the ability to heal, find lost items, locate disoriented animals. These figures enjoyed high social standing. Unfortunately, the diversification of occupations and the so-called modernity have contributed to the fading of these ancestral and traditional practices.

However, during these periods of foreign influence, new techniques, expertise, and crafts were introduced. For example, the Japanese tea ceremony utilizing finely crafted whisks to emulsify the infusion. These knowledge transfers brought refinement, serving as the foundation of contemporary Taiwanese bamboo design. The results of this endeavor can be witnessed in a few days when we visit the National Taiwan Craft Research and Development Institute (NTCRI) in Nantau for the additional programs of this World Bamboo Congress.

Last September, in collaboration with the Guatemala Bamboo Society, the WBO organized an incredible bamboo workshop in Punta Brava, on the shores of Lake Izabal. There, I encountered the international Taiwan team led by Kevin Ou, who are promoting sophisticated bamboo cultivation techniques, architectural construction, and the integration of bamboo with other crops for economic and social progress. Indeed, Taiwan is a key country in supporting bamboo. We are all aware that our planet is facing unprecedented challenges. Tensions and conflicts are on the rise, and the devastating effects of climate change are becoming increasingly apparent. In the face of daily anxieties brought on by the news, we cannot afford to close our eyes, cover our ears, and retreat into isolation. There is no escape.

Bamboo is not only a valuable resource for its environmental benefits and versatility, but it also plays a significant role in the global economy. The bamboo market has been steadily growing, with projections showing continuous expansion in the coming years. In 2020, the global bamboo market was valued at \$70.59 billion. This year, it is expected to reach \$75.12 billion. By 2028, it is projected to exceed \$97.78 billion. It is remarkable to witness the rapid growth of the bamboo industry, and it is expected to surpass \$100 billion by the end of the decade. This growth can be attributed to the increasing demand for sustainable and eco-friendly products across various sectors. Bamboo is used in numerous industries, including construction, furniture, textiles, paper,

and more. Its strength, durability, and renewable nature make it an attractive alternative to traditional materials.

As bamboo continues to flourish, so does the burgeoning interest of a new generation in this remarkable plant. The escalating concerns of climate change are palpable, reflected in the eco-anxiety prevalent among teenagers. Among them are individuals driven to make a difference and "change the world". These are the faces you encounter at various bamboo workshops, conferences, and exhibitions new — future planters, growers, researchers, architects, doctors, and even artisans like bakers, builders, and bartenders. Together, they form a vibrant new "bamboosphere". The Next Generation Bamboo.

Much like the soul and essence of the World Bamboo Organization (WBO), a network of fifty-five ambassadors hail from 25 countries worldwide. These ambassadors serve as a conduit of information, amplifying the voice of bamboo. They ardently work to disseminate knowledge and foster the use of bamboo through innovative experiences and workshops. Educating the youth is a core mission; they engage in school programs to enlighten and inspire young minds. Annually, on September 18, they unite to celebrate World Bamboo Day, an initiative of the World Bamboo Organization.

This unique event holds immense significance in fostering knowledge transfer. For many participants, both young and old, it provides a tactile connection with a plant so intricately designed to fit the contours of the human hand. Through this educational interaction, bamboo emerges as a pivotal player in maintaining planetary balance. The focal points lie in sustainable plantations and diverse applications. I urge you to amplify this fundamental message—bamboo's growth relies on your support. We must use our collective intelligence to imagine and act for a better world. This has been the challenge of humanity since time immemorial. We have proven that we know how to build bamboo bridges. But today, we call for an "alliance between humans and bamboo for sustainable development".

With the help of this exceptional resource, with our capacity for innovation, and with our technology to transform, we will revolutionize the way we build, heal, and care. Thank you.