Press Release

2026 Integral Conversation:
Connecting Through Water to Address Shared Global Challenges

November 2, 2026, Guilin – The three-day 2026 Integral Conversation, hosted by Integral Institute, successfully concluded on October 31 in Guilin. Under the theme "Water Connects, We Thrive," the event brought together leaders and experts from business, academia, research, ecological conservation, arts and culture. Exploring the deep interconnections between water, society, the economy and nature across four dimensions – Humanity, Heritage, Intelligence and Stewardship – the dialogue advanced cross-sector exchange and collaboration. The event was held at Integral, Esquel Group's sustainable development garden in Guilin, attracting nearly 300 participants.



Nearly 300 participants gathered at Integral in Guilin for the 2026 Integral Conversation.

Against the backdrop of climate change, growing pressure on water resources and other global challenges, participants drew on experience and insights across sectors to explore how systems thinking can help break down conventional boundaries and identify new pathways toward sustainable development. During the event, Integral Institute and The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to strengthen collaboration at the intersection of the arts, education and sustainability.

Water Connects: Rethinking the Relationship Between People and Nature

Water connects regions, ecosystems and communities, offering a critical lens for rethinking shared global challenges. In his welcome remarks, **Mr. Edgar Tung**, Council Member of Integral Institute, highlighted that environmental, economic, technological and social issues are closely interconnected. He added, "Integral Conversation brings together people from diverse backgrounds and disciplines to explore shared global challenges from fresh perspectives. Through open dialogue and cross-disciplinary exchange, we seek to inspire new thinking and create opportunities for meaningful collaboration and positive change."



Mr. Edgar Tung, Council Member of Integral Institute, delivers the welcome remarks.

During the Fireside Chat moderated by **Dr. York Chow Yat-ngok**, Chief Medical Officer and Corporate Advisor of AIA Hong Kong and Macau, **Sir Gordon Wu**, Founder and Chairman of Hopewell Holdings Limited, reflected on his experience in large-scale infrastructure and regional development. Drawing parallels with water, he described connectivity as a key driver of economic growth and emphasized the importance of long-term planning and cross-regional collaboration.



(From left) Sir Gordon Wu, Founder and Chairman of Hopewell Holdings Limited, and Dr. York Chow Yat-ngok, Chief Medical Officer and Corporate Advisor of AIA Hong Kong and Macau.

In her opening remarks, **Ms. Teresa Yang**, Council Member of Integral Institute, emphasized that interconnected water challenges require both systems thinking and collective action. She remarked, “Water connects communities, industries, and ecosystems, reminding us that today's challenges cannot be addressed in isolation. Integral Conversation encourages systems thinking and collective action, turning shared understanding into meaningful progress.”



Ms. Teresa Yang, Council Member of Integral Institute, delivers the opening remarks.

In *"Water and Heritage: What Ancient Water Cultures Knew That We Have Forgotten"*, **Mr. Jason Goodwin**, Writer, Historian and Tea Scholar, drew on the history of the tea trade to show how water has enabled civilizations to meet and learn from one another. Meanwhile, *"Water and Humanity: Courage, Conscience, and the People Who Protect Water"* featured **Mr. Su Ning**, Painter and Writer, and **Ms. Silvia Vásquez-Lavado**, Mountaineer, Author, Humanitarian and Explorer. Drawing respectively on cross-cultural artistic experiences and personal healing, they explored the profound connections between water, humanity, and nature, highlighting the importance of humility and respect in living in harmony with the natural world.



(From left) Mr. Tsang Tak-sing, Former Secretary for Home Affairs of the HKSARG, moderates the Water and Heritage panel featuring Mr. Jason Goodwin, Writer, Historian and Tea Scholar.



(From left) Mr. Su Ning, Painter and Writer; Ms. Silvia Vásquez-Lavado, Mountaineer, Author, Humanitarian and Explorer; and Mr. Roger Lee, Founder of Roger Lead Inc. and Certified Forum Facilitator at YPO.

In a keynote address moderated by **Ms. Marjorie Yang**, Chairman of Esquel Group**, Mr. Scott Vaughan**, Senior Fellow at the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and International Chief Advisor to the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED), offered a broad perspective on global water governance. He emphasized, "Water transcends borders and cultures, connecting us all. China's basin-wide planning and sponge cities show that managing water as an interconnected system can strengthen climate resilience and offer valuable lessons for the world."



(From left) Mr. Scott Vaughan, Senior Fellow at the International Institute for Sustainable Development (IISD) and International Chief Advisor to the China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED), and Ms. Marjorie Yang, Chairman of Esquel Group.

From Systems Thinking to Action: Building Resilience

Translating systems thinking into practical action was another key focus of the 2026 Integral Conversation. Speakers from industry, technology, finance and ecological conservation shared practical experience in identifying water risks, improving resource efficiency and balancing economic development with ecological protection.

In his remarks, **Mr. Wu Xiaogang,** Vice Mayor of Guilin Municipal Government, recognized Integral's contributions to green technology innovation and its social and economic impact. He remarked, “This year’s theme, ‘Water Connects, We Thrive,’ closely aligns with Guilin’s efforts to become a world-class tourism city and explore greener pathways for industrial development. We look forward to deepening collaboration with our partners to advance green technologies.”



Mr. Wu Xiaogang, Vice Mayor of Guilin Municipal Government, delivers his remarks.

The *"Water and Intelligence: From Hidden Data to Shared Decisions"* panel brought together **Ms. Susan Hu**, Lead, Nature and Climate, Greater China, World Economic Forum; **Ms. Sabrina Peng**, Senior Vice President and Chief Sustainability Officer of Ant Group; and **Ms. Debra Tan**, Head and Director of CWR to examine water risks, digital technology and financial mechanisms. Ms. Tan warned that the gradual accumulation of water-related pressures could create systemic financial risks. Drawing on the Southeast Asia Partnership for Adaptation through Water (SEAPAW), Ms. Hu called for closer collaboration and financial innovation to direct capital toward climate-resilient projects. Ms. Peng shared Ant Group's green computing and digital water management practices, demonstrating how digital platforms can encourage greener choices and collective action.



(From left) Ms. Susan Hu, Lead, Nature and Climate, Greater China, World Economic Forum; Ms. Sabrina Peng, Senior Vice President and Chief Sustainability Officer of Ant Group; Ms. Debra Tan, Head and Director of CWR; and Mr. Jacky Yuen, Investment Director at qonvolv Ventures.

In *"Water and Stewardship: Leadership in an Age of Ecological Limits,"* alongside related sharing sessions, **Ms. Pan Yue**, Vice Chairperson of Pan Wenshi Institute of Biodiversity Research (Beijing), and **Professor Ma Hongbo**, Chief Expert of Research Center for Ecological Civilization on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, Qinghai Institute of Public Administration, shared their conservation work, from protecting Chinese white dolphins in Sanniang Bay, Guangxi, to safeguarding Sanjiangyuan, known as the "Water Tower of Asia". Ms. Pan emphasized that conservation and economic development can advance together for mutual benefit. Professor Ma added that effective conservation requires both top-down and bottom-up efforts, placing local communities at its center and enabling residents to become active stewards of their environment through institutional innovation.



(From left) Professor Wang Tianyi, Council Member of Integral Institute; Ms. Pan Yue, Vice Chairperson of Pan Wenshi Institute of Biodiversity Research (Beijing); and Professor Ma Hongbo, Chief Expert of Research Center for Ecological Civilization on the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau, Qinghai Institute of Public Administration.

Connecting Knowledge, Business, and the Arts for Collective Action

Discussions also extended to education, talent development, and arts and culture, exploring how different sectors can leverage their strengths to advance sustainable development collectively.

In the "Knowledge Plenary", **Professor Pierre Venter**, Vice-Chancellor of Massey University, and **Professor Yang Bin**, Vice Chancellor of Tsinghua University Council, Director of the Institute for Sustainable Social Value, Professor of the School of Economics and Management, and Director of the Research Center for Leadership Development and Research, Tsinghua University, discussed how academia can break down disciplinary boundaries and deepen collaboration with industry, turning frontier sustainability research into a driving force for social governance and industrial upgrading.



(From left) Professor Pierre Venter, Vice-Chancellor of Massey University; Professor Yang Bin, Vice Chancellor of Tsinghua University Council, Director of the Institute for Sustainable Social Value; Professor of the School of Economics and Management, and Director of the Research Center for Leadership Development and Research, Tsinghua University; and Professor Hau Lee, Council Chair of Integral Institute.

In the "CEO Plenary", **Mrs. Christine Ip**, Senior Business Advisor for Group Private Banking and former Vice Chairman of Greater China at United Overseas Bank; **Mr. Evan Guo**, Chairman and CEO of Zhaopin Limited; and the Director of The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) explored how the arts, finance and talent development can help individuals and communities thrive amid change. The HKAPA emphasized the role of arts education in cultivating empathy and responsibility while engaging with climate and well-being. Mrs. Ip called for sustained investment by financial institutions in the arts, talent and community development. Mr. Guo noted that as AI reshapes work and society, businesses need to balance productivity with human vitality and social value.



(From left) Mr. Evan Guo, Chairman and CEO of Zhaopin Limited; Mrs. Christine Ip, Senior Business Advisor for Group Private Banking and former Vice Chairman of Greater China at United Overseas Bank; Director of The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts; and Professor Hau Lee, Council Chair of Integral Institute.

Integral Institute and HKAPA Sign MOU

During the 2026 Integral Conversation, Integral Institute and the Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts (HKAPA) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to explore new models of collaboration across arts, education and sustainability. Built on shared aspirations, the partnership brings together the complementary expertise and resources of both organizations to create long-term value.

Potential initiatives include artist residencies, cultural exchanges, sustainability-focused workshops, and creative projects involving natural dyeing and sustainable costume design. Through this partnership, both organizations hope to deepen connections between the arts and sustainability, creating new possibilities for continued collaboration.

The 2026 Integral Conversation also featured cultural exchanges and immersive experiences, inviting participants to experience the connections between the arts and sustainability through music, dance and nature.

In his closing remarks, **Professor Hau Lee**, Council Chair of Integral Institute, called for deeper collaboration. Reflecting on the focus on interconnected sustainability challenges, he expressed the hope that Integral Conversation would go beyond building consensus to create a network of collaboration connecting policymakers, academics, business leaders, and artists. Such connections, he emphasized, can help translate ideas into practice and contribute to a future in which humanity and nature thrive together.



Professor Hau Lee, Council Chair of Integral Institute, delivers the closing remarks.

Integral Conversation has, since its founding in 2014, convened over 3,000 representatives from more than 100 industries around the world. Looking ahead, it will continue to bring together global minds and practitioners to foster dialogue and collaboration that translate ideas into action.

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About Integral Conversation

Integral Conversation, presented by the Integral Institute, is a premier cross-disciplinary platform that brings together influential thought leaders and professionals from diverse fields. The event explores emerging ideas and innovative practices in sustainable development. By sharing global perspectives and fostering cross-sector dialogue, Integral Conversation inspires new solutions to today's most pressing global challenges. Our conversations span culture, education, technological innovation, urban planning and architecture, healthcare, digital transformation, and other fields. Together, participants explore how sustainability can be embedded across disciplines—transforming vision into reality and ideas into action.

About Integral Institute

Nurturing Sustainable Minds. Harmonizing Human and Nature.

Integral Institute is a non-profit organization that brings together experts, educators, researchers, entrepreneurs and other stakeholders to explore and deliberate sustainability at personal, institutional, and social levels. We cultivate transformative models, best practices, and offer a diverse range of programs to empower like-minded individuals and organizations through our comprehensive education and research platform.-