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### **International Symposium at HKUST Promotes Ecological Studies of Mangrove Forests**

Over 150 scientists from twelve countries and regions gathered at the Hong Kong University of Science & Technology this week (1 to 3 September) to participate in the Asia-Pacific Symposium on Mangrove Ecosystems, which aimed to promote scientific exchange and regional collaboration in the ecological study, utilization, conservation and management of mangrove forests.

"Scientific research over the years has indicated that mangrove forests play many important roles such as coastal stabilization and protection against winds and storms, and the production of nutrients, forest resources and animal species of economic importance," says Dr Yuk-Shan Wong, Associate Director of HKUST's Research Centre and Chairman of the Organising Committee for the symposium. "Unfortunately, over-exploitation and destruction of mangroves has become a world-wide phenomenon which seriously threatens the sustainability of these unique ecosystems."

During the symposium, more than 160 papers were presented, focusing on recent advances in mangrove ecology, the application and utilization of mangrove resources, and the conservation and management of mangrove ecosystems.

Research topics that attracted local interest included studies of Hong Kong's Mai Po mangrove ecosystem and of the feasibility of using mangrove wetlands in Hong Kong and Shenzhen to treat industrial and domestic wastewater.

The symposium was organised by the Research Centre and Department of Biology at HKUST and the organising committee was formed by academics from various tertiary institutions in Hong Kong. The symposium was also sponsored by The international Society for Mangrove Ecosystems, World Wide Fund for Nature, Hong Kong, The Croucher Foundation, The Caltex Green Fund and The Hong Kong Electric Co. Ltd.

*(For information please call the Public Affairs Office at 358-6307 or pager 1163388 call 2652)*