

SPOTLIGHT

Ningbo Showcases Green Innovation and Tech Leadership to SCO Delegates

By Zhao Yu

Manufacturing and ports are two of Ningbo's key strengths, and during the Shanghai Cooperation Organization Energy Ministers Meeting, delegates from SCO countries had the opportunity to explore the city's impressive capabilities.

On June 27, delegates from Kazakhstan, Russia, Uzbekistan, and other nations visited the ZEEKR Meishan Smart Factory, Ningbo Zhoushan Port Meidong Container Terminal Co., Ltd., and Ningbo Orient Cable Co., Ltd. The visit offered a glimpse into Ningbo's advancements in new energy applications and green development.

Electric Vehicles Everywhere

The first stop was the ZEEKR Meishan Smart Factory, owned by Geely Holding Group.

As they approached the assembly line, the delegation was impressed by the level of automation: smart carts swiftly moved along preset tracks, delivering components to designated spots with precision; industrial robots extended their flexible arms, using advanced visual recognition technology to quickly pick up parts, accurately locate mounting holes, and complete installations at rapid speeds.

"The scale of the factory and its level of automation are truly remarkable," said Zbrahim Alnajem, Deputy Head of Mission and Counselor at the Embassy of Kuwait in China.

Alnajem reflected on his initial impressions of China, noting the widespread adoption of electric vehicles. "We definitely need more electric vehicles to address climate change, while also providing consumers with more choices," he emphasized.

Gulnur Nurkeyeva, Managing Partner at Grata International Law Firm in Kazakhstan, shared a similar sentiment. "Since coming to China, I've replaced two gasoline-powered cars with electric vehicles!" she said.

"If you want to change the world, start with yourself.



Delegates from SCO countries explore Ningbo's advancements in new energy applications and green development. [Photo by Xu Tianchang]

Switching to electric vehicles is a contribution we can all make to reduce pollution," she added.

From Traditional to Green

Vast arrays of photovoltaic panels gleamed under the sun, while the sea breeze gently turned the massive blades of wind turbines. This is the Meishan Port Area, the heart of Ningbo Zhoushan Port. Recently, the port launched the province's first integrated demonstration project that combines distributed wind power, photovoltaics, energy storage, and microgrids. This initiative is already driving significant reductions in the port's overall energy consumption and carbon emissions intensity.

"What impressed me most was the intelligent energy management here," said Zhanat Zhakhmetova, Director of the Digital Development Department at NC KazMunaiGas. Ningbo has built a comprehensive smart energy system, complete with power generation and grid load management to real-time monitoring of energy

storage systems. "This end-to-end intelligent management, which optimizes both energy production and consumption, is key to achieving sustainable development."

Zhanat Zhakhmetova also emphasized that Ningbo's innovative approach to smart energy management and green infrastructure offers valuable lessons for other countries.

"This is the green port I envisioned!" said Ulzhan Tulegenova Akhmetova, Head of Decarbonisation Division at NC KazMunaiGas. This was her first visit to a port. "The transformation from a traditional port to a green one—Ningbo has set a perfect example."

As an environmentalist, she paid special attention to the port's carbon reduction metrics. "Seeing the specific pathways and figures for achieving carbon neutrality is truly exciting. The port industry has enormous potential for carbon reduction."

Nurkeyeva added that Ningbo Zhoushan Port is a real-world example of how carbon neutrality policies are being implemented globally.

"Reports or policies come

across as feasible in the abstract, but witnessing it firsthand is entirely different," she said. What impressed her most was learning that many port facilities could be powered by just five wind turbines. "This proves that carbon neutrality isn't just a policy slogan—it can be put into real action."

Sharing Ningbo's Success

The final stop for delegates was the Ningbo Orient Cable Future Factory. As one of the world's top ten submarine cable manufacturers, Orient Cable specializes in the R&D and production of high-end marine energy equipment. The delegates toured the factory's digital exhibition center, high-voltage submarine cable production lines, testing facilities, and its 20,000-ton-class wharf.

"Our country also has factories, but the production scale here is truly impressive. The variety of products and advanced production lines are goals we need to strive toward," said Akmalikhon Khadjikhanov, General Manager of Silk Road

Energy Planning Engineering Consulting Co., Ltd. in Uzbekistan.

As an energy professional, Khojikhonov paid particular attention to Ningbo's thriving tech sector: "Ningbo has a large number of advanced tech companies, which is why it has developed so rapidly."

For many delegates, this was their first visit to Ningbo. "I'm delighted to discover another vibrant city in China. Ningbo is a beautiful city with friendly people and a lovely natural environment," said Alnajem.

"I thought Ningbo was a small city, but it has nearly 10 million people, equivalent to half of Kazakhstan's population. The city boasts high-tech modern factories alongside beautiful lakes and rivers. It's both tranquil and full of development opportunities—a truly ideal place to live and work," said Nurkeyeva.

Zhakhmetova remarked, "China, especially Ningbo, should actively share these successful experiences to help more countries achieve sustainable development goals."

Three Ningbo Companies Named in 2025 Hurun Global Unicorn Index

By Jin Yuhan

On June 26, the Hurun Research Institute released its Global Unicorn Index 2025, a ranking of the world's unicorns, defined as start-ups founded in the 2000s, worth at least a billion dollars and not yet listed on a public exchange. The cut-off was 1 January 2025, with significant changes in valuation updated up to the date of release. Hurun Research has been tracking unicorns since 2017.

A record 1,523 companies made the list this year, up by 70 from last year. The United States and China dominated the rankings, with 758 and 343 companies, respectively, together accounting for over two-thirds of the global total. SpaceX, OpenAI, and ByteDance took the top three spots.

Three companies from Ningbo earned places on the prestigious list: Rong Semiconductor (Ningbo) Co., Ltd. valued at 17 billion yuan, ranked 510th globally), Axera Semiconductor Co., Ltd. (valued at 9.5 billion yuan, ranked 958th), and Ningbo Keyuan Petrochemicals Co., Ltd. (valued at 8 billion yuan, ranked 1104th).

Rong Semiconductor has remained on the global unicorn list since its founding in April 2021. Earlier this year, on April 9, the company broke ground on a 12-inch integrated circuit chip production facility in Ningbo. The project carries a total investment of 16 billion yuan and is expected to reach a monthly output of 35,000 12-inch wafers once operational.

Axera Semiconductor and Keyuan Petrochemicals are both new entrants to the list. In April, Axera completed its Series C funding round, raising over 1 billion yuan. However, the new valuation was not reflected in this year's Hurun ranking, suggesting the company could climb higher if it remains unlisted through next year.

Keyuan Petrochemicals completed the first tranche of its Series D financing at the start of the year, achieving a valuation of 8 billion yuan. Founded in 2007 with a registered capital of 743 million yuan, the company specializes in refined chemicals and has comprehensive facilities to process residual oil into finished products.

Ningbo has seen several unicorns go public in recent years, including ZEEKR, Jenseare Scientific Co., Ltd., and Forehope Electronic (Ningbo) Co., Ltd. Looking ahead, emerging companies such as GravityXR, SynSense, and Bluetron (supOS) are considered strong contenders for future inclusion in the global unicorn rankings.

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Watching Over the "Mythical Bird"

By Jin Lu

At Zhutie Donyu, part of the Jiushan Islands National Nature Reserve, the Chinese crested tern has entered a critical breeding phase. Often dubbed the "mythical bird" in China, the species is classified under first-class national protection and has a global population of just around 200. The Jiushan Islands represent its largest known breeding site, where it nests alongside greater crested terns.

Since 2017, the reserve has recruited volunteers each year during the April-August breeding season to live on the islands and monitor tern activ-

ity. This year, five volunteers were selected from a pool of more than 6,000 applicants. The first group—Wei Yuning, Zhang Lijun, and Wang Yuqi—began their work in late April on Jigushan Island, conducting round-the-clock monitoring both on-site and via remote equipment.

As of June, around 2,000 greater crested terns and 800-1,000 nests have been recorded on Zhutie Donyu. Five Chinese crested tern chicks have hatched, while another clutch is still under incubation.

On June 25, the second team—Zhao Ziyang, 20, from Beijing, and Zhu Xiuhue, 18, from Shanghai—arrived to

continue the work under expert supervision. Despite being the youngest members of the group, both bring years of birdwatching experience and are now pursuing degrees in biology and animal science, respectively.

Living conditions on the island are challenging, with no air conditioning, an unstable power supply, and plenty of mosquitoes, as well as the occasional snake. But the volunteers take it all in stride. On their first day, they spotted a particularly endearing chick, easily recognized by its refusal to leave its brick perch except when food is involved. With its quirky habits and distinctive



The Chinese crested tern. [Photo by Zhao Ziyang]

look, it quickly became a favorite subject of observation. "Inconveniences aside,

we're ready for this challenge and the wonder that comes with it," the volunteers said.