

Preliminary Discussion Brief on CCICED Phase VI

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I. Background

The China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED), as a high-level advisory body, has steadfastly promoted sustainable development and enjoyed recognition from the Government of China at senior levels. At the CCICED Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2014, Mr. Zhang Gaoli, China's Vice Premier of the State Council and CCICED Chairperson, said:

“The CCICED has provided a platform of dialogue between Chinese and international high-level officials, opened a door to international experience in sustainable development, and served as a bridge for bilateral exchange on environment and development best practices between China and the international community. It has played a positive role in supporting China's economic development and environmental protection for more than 20 years. The Chinese government will as always support the long-term development of CCICED, and hopes the Council will continue to provide knowledge and serve as a platform for bilateral exchange, thus contributing ever more to the green development of China and the world.”

Jointly initiated by China and the international community, CCICED has been serving for close to a quarter century as a dialogue and exchange platform. It is viewed as an important window for the international community to deliver concerns to the Chinese government, receive feedback, and learn about China's progress in environment and development. Therefore, CCICED has drawn great attention and enjoyed strong support from the international community.

The world has undergone dramatic change over the last 20 years. Environmental issues, with their increasing complexity that involves many various sectors, have become great social, political, economic and diplomatic concerns—as well as becoming a significant element in seeking compatible development paths for China and the rest of the world. Thus, the only pathway for China to address environmental matters is to promote sustainable development both in China and internationally.

On the other hand, China is now the second largest economic entity in the world, which has led not only to the country's increased international standing and expanding influence, but also to calls for China to take on more responsibilities in line with its expanded capabilities; and thereby make a greater contribution to sustained economic growth and an improved global governance system. It is also undeniable that every step taken by China in its development trend matters a lot to development efforts in other parts of the world.

Continuing to serve as a platform for two-way (or more) exchange and interaction, CCICED expects to be entrusted with multiple historic missions in the new normal era with its emphasis on deep national reforms. CCICED must continue its efforts to integrate international experience and best practice into China's green development and ecological civilization, while at the same time disseminating China's unique experience in promoting environment and development. In so doing, China can anticipate contributing to an improved international environmental governance system even as the country improves its own situation.

Coming at the point when China launches its 13th Five Year Plan, and as the world community launches the UN Sustainable Development 2030 goals and prepares to seriously tackle climate change, CCICED Phase VI is perfectly placed. This brief provides a starting point that will evolve during the coming months into dialogue and then into a full plan for CCICED Phase VI.

II. Some Reform Suggestions

1) Council Members and Experts

CCICED has been fortunate in having well-known scientists, environmental administrators, plus other distinguished individuals in the communities of business, governmental and political life, serve either as members or in CCICED's research and other activities. In the future, greater effort is needed to select "thought leaders" who can be highly influential at the highest levels inside and outside of China. Council members should come from diverse backgrounds and expertise. They may be drawn from the senior ranks of politicians, business leaders, scientists, and renowned think tank leaders, etc., in order to maintain and enhance the position of CCICED as a very high level and high standard advisory body. Furthermore, CCICED also will encourage international experts and council members to voice different views and perspectives and not always feel constrained to seek consensus points of view. In this way, those involved with this Council can promote innovative thinking and help China to identify alternative solutions to its challenges and problems, and to the issues facing the world where China may play a useful role.

2) Research

In terms of research scope, CCICED should as always closely follow China's ecological civilization, share China's experience and best practices with the international community, and focus on exchange and interaction between China and the international community in ways that are mutually beneficial. In terms of planning and decision making, in addition to the Chief Advisor working mechanism, an Academic Council could be established to provide advisory support for setting the scope of research, identifying research topics, responding to urgent advisory needs, and helping to maintain high quality in CCICED efforts.

3) CCICED Operations

For many years, CCICED has been considered as a provisional institute, renewed for five-year terms. However, under the new circumstances within China, CCICED requires greater continuity in its operations if it is to meet expectations, not only its historic mission as entrusted by the Chinese government and international community, but also the expanded efforts required to address the very complicated landscape of green development and ecological civilization over the coming decades. It is highly suggested that CCICED change its five-year phase mode of operation, instead, putting in place a permanent working mechanism to steadfastly and strongly support the Chinese government and the international community.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Environmental Protection should provide more support for the daily operation of CCICED, which includes upgrading the level of its management organization, improving management and organizational structure, contributing more personnel to enhance efficiency and effectiveness; and thus providing support for CCICED's long-term development and contributions.

III. Conclusion

This introductory brief, based on discussion during the bureau meeting and the general meeting, will be developed into a framework document for CCICED Phase VI with useful input contributed by the meeting participants, thereby providing guidance to the CCICED draft policy research framework and draft CCICED Charter as well as contributing to the preparation for CCICED Phase VI.