

Speech by Vice Chairman Xie Zhenhua at the Closing Ceremony of the 1st Meeting of the 3rd Phase of CCICED

Distinguished members, experts, ladies and gentlemen,

After three days of intensive and highly efficient work of all members and experts, this meeting has come to a successful conclusion. First of all, on behalf of Chairman Wen Jiabao and the bureau of the 3rd phase of CCICED, I would like to extend my congratulations to members and experts of this new phase of the CCICED. At the same time, I would like to express my thanks to all members and experts for their diligent commitment to China's cause of environment and development.

Chairman Wen Jiabao delivered a written speech at the opening ceremony of the meeting. He stressed that China would steadfastly implement its sustainable development strategy and gave his expectations and requests for a successful annual meeting of this phase of the CCICED. Four keynote speeches and two reports on "Issue Papers" were arranged by the meeting. The presentations were comprehensive and original in light of their contents and thoughts, playing a significant role in guiding the meeting's discussion direction and helping to finalize recommendations to the Chinese government. Vice Governors from four provinces and autonomous regions, namely Liao Ning, Inner Mongolia, Fu Jian and Guang Xi, briefed the meeting on their preliminary practices of sustainable development. Within a very short period of time after their establishment and under the condition of working mechanism not fully implemented, 4 Task Forces have completed their staged reports and made lots of valuable comments and policy recommendations by doing a great deal of work. Premier Zhu Rongji will meet members and experts present at this meeting this afternoon, hearing your views personally and exchanging views with you on China's environment and development.

During the meeting, centering around the theme "Environment, Development and Governance-Response to the World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD)", members and experts expressed their views and held active and enthusiastic discussions and put forward lots of valuable comments on various issues, including development modalities, government's comprehensive decision-makings, establishment of cooperative partnership between government, enterprise and the public, strengthening technical renovation and education on sustainable development, implementing ecological protection and construction and global environmental issues, etc. A very good atmosphere prevailed all along the meeting. We are pleased to notice that the participants had consensus as well as fiery debates on several issues by fully expressing their views. This is greatly conducive to collecting wisdom and is also of great significance to formulating right policies. To sum up, after these few days of intensive work, the meeting has concluded each item of its agenda and reached some achievements as expected. Hereby, on behalf of the bureau, I would like to extend my sincere thanks to all members and experts for their hard work.

With regard to the work of the new phase of the CCICED, the participants put forward many excellent suggestions at and after the meeting. Now, I would like to sum them up as follows:

First, about the position and objectives of the CCICED. The CCICED is a high level advisory body to the Chinese government, whose views and recommendations have brought direct impact on the State Council and related sectors and local governments. Lots of remarkable work has been done by the first two phases of the

CCICED so as to solve the important and imminent problems in China's environment and development, bringing about great impact on China's implementation of sustainable development. This new phase of the CCICED will continue to play a characteristic and significant role in China's environment and development. The third CCICED works in an important period during which China is building up a well off society in an all-around way. In this regard, achievements made by members and experts of the CCICED will sure continue to bring about important impact on government's decision-making during this process.

Second, about the working direction of the CCICED. The 16th CPC National Congress set out grand objective of building a well-off society in an all-around way within the next 20 years, which includes:

--Efforts will be made to quadruple the GDP of the year 2000 by 2020, and China's overall national strength and international competitiveness will increase markedly. (In details, we will in the main achieve industrialization and establish a full-fledged socialist market economy and a more open and viable economic system. The proportion of urban population will go up considerably and the trend of widening differences between industry and agriculture, between urban and rural areas and between regions will be reversed step by step. We will have a fairly sound social security system. There will be a higher rate of employment. People will have more family property and lead a more prosperous life.)

--Socialist democracy and the legal system will be further improved. The basic principle of ruling the country by law will be implemented completely. (The political, economic and cultural rights and interests of the people will be respected and guaranteed in real earnest. Democracy at the grassroots level will be better practiced. People will enjoy a sound public order and live and work in peace and contentment.)

--The ideological and ethical standards, the scientific and cultural qualities, and the health of the whole people will be enhanced notably. (A sound modern national educational system, scientific, technological and cultural innovation systems as well as nationwide fitness and medical and health systems will take shape. People will have access to better education. We will make senior secondary education basically universal in the country and eliminate illiteracy. A learning society in which all the people will learn or even pursue life-long education will emerge to boost their all-round development.)

--The capability of sustainable development will be steadily enhanced. The ecological environment will be improved. The efficiency of using resources will be increased significantly. We will enhance harmony between man and nature to push the whole society onto a path to civilized development featuring the growth of production, an affluent life and a sound ecosystem.

The above-said objective covers indexes like economic growth, social development and environmental protection, etc. In this regard, it is an objective of sustainable development. The World Summit on Sustainable Development, which was held not long ago, identified economic growth, social development and environmental protection as three pillars of sustainable development and principles of mutual support and coordinated development among these three fields. Thus accordingly, the working direction and focus of the 3rd phase of the CCICED are: by closely centering around the objectives set out by the 16th CPC National Congress and carrying out the spirit of the WSSD and in accordance with China's national conditions, to put forward suggestions on issues which we hope could be key research projects of the CCICED,

including How to coordinate the relationship between environment and development; How to persist in using IT to propel industrialization, which will, in turn, stimulate IT application, blazing a new trail to industrialization featuring high scientific and technological content, good economic returns, low resources consumption, little environmental pollution and a full display of advantages in human resources; How to enhance the country's capability of sustainable development; and how to avoid various potential and practical challenges during the development process.

Third, about the task forces. The task force plays an essentially fundamental role in the work of the CCICED. Based on research achievements of task forces, policy recommendations are formulated through discussions during which the members' wisdom and experience are collected so as to improve the original research outcomes. During the process of establishing the task forces, the bureau laid down the following basic principles in line with the "Rules of Procedure": First, the content of research projects must be key issues that calls for immediate solutions by the Chinese government in the field of environment and development; Second, it is our wish that the "Core Fund" mechanism be strengthened with a view to collecting enough research fund; Third, an active participation of Chinese and international high-level experts and scholars must be ensured. In this regard, we will conscientiously hear and study proposals of members and experts on establishing new task forces. New task forces will be established in a timely manner so as to make early preparations for every annual meeting of this phase of the CCICED.

Four task forces briefed the meeting on their staged research achievements. The research outcome of the task force on biodiversity indicates that, as the invasion of foreign species could bring impact on the ecological environment in China, it has become a key issue that needs to be solved immediately. Thus it is of critical importance to establish a risk assessment system and scientifically reasonable supervision system. The task force on forestry and grassland put forward suggestions of minor policy amendments while affirming the national policies of natural forests protection and returning farmlands to forests and grasslands. The working group on environmental economics came up with recommendations like setting resource prices in a reasonable manner, conducting assessments on environmental losses and profits and levying environmental taxes. The task force on WTO and environment summed up its previous work within a very short time and put forth research directions for the next stage. On the whole, all the researches done by the task forces have been excellent and highly effective, providing with us some right views and research concepts. It is our hope that, the task forces would continue to focus their attention on researches in the aspect of implementation and to provide policy recommendations for the government to considerate. During the discussion, some members raised questions like as four task forces have given their reports this year, does it mean that their missions have been over? And how to deal with the future work of task forces? The bureau considered on this and decided that in accordance with the Rules of Procedure, missions are over for those task forces who have submitted their reports this year. While in line with the working procedures of establishing task forces, applications for new task forces are to be made if new research projects and proposals are raised in this field.

Fourth, about the implementation of achievements of the CCICED. The achievements of the CCICED include important reports at the meetings of the CCICED, findings of task forces and policy recommendations to the Chinese government. With a view to bringing the role of the CCICED into full play, a

multi-channeled mechanism of collection, transportation and communications should be established so as to submit the above-said achievements to the relative government sectors in time and to follow and collect responses from government sectors and local governments. The Secretariat needs to play a bigger role in this respect.

Fifth, about strengthening China's role in the field of international environment and development. During China's rapid economic growth process, China has avoided a vast degradation of environment quality and accumulated some experience accordingly. However, we are clearly aware that, China is still a developing country and faced with many environmental problems during its development process. Particularly, new issues will come up with rapid economic growth. The implementation of sustainable development still has a long way to go and requires continuous attention and support from all countries. We will resolutely solve China's environmental and development problems by a down-to-earth and domestically oriented approach, since it will be a contribution to the global sustainable development if China solves its own problems. At the same time, we will actively participate in international cooperation, adhere to the signed and acceded international conventions, and make our due contribution to the global cause of sustainable development.

Sixth, about the date and venue of the next year's meeting. The 3rd phase of the CCICED works in a transition period when the Chinese government gets a reshuffle next year. Next year's meeting is thus been preliminarily scheduled in November 2003. Notice regarding the meeting's date and venue will be released in due time to enable members and experts to make advanced preparations.

On the occasion of the beginning of the new phase of the CCICED, we would like to extend our sincere thanks to members and experts for their remarkable contribution to the last two phases of the CCICED. Some of the members and experts are no longer directly involved in the activities of the CCICED, but we will keep in touch with them through different means. It is also our hope that they could continue to pay attention to China's environment and development. We are pleased to see that, some new members have joined the CCICED and have become an important force for an effective work of the new phase of CCICED, bringing new inputs to the CCICED with their original concepts and thoughts. We are confident that this new phase of the CCICED will do a better job. In addition, there are some members making suggestions on the formation of the new phase of the CCICED as they hope that the number of members could be increased in some fields and aspects. We will take these suggestions into serious consideration.

Finally, I would like to thank all old and new friends for their contribution to China's sustainable development. We appreciate the work and efforts by the Secretariat, Canadian Office and lead experts and working teams to the 3rd phase of the CCICED. We are also grateful for all the working staff for preparing and organizing this meeting.

Thank you.

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