

Actively Promoting Integrated Decision-Making on Environment and Development by Government

Opening Remarks at the 1st Meeting of the 3rd Phase of CCICED

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

China Council for International Cooperation on Environment and Development (CCICED) has proceeded for 10 years in two phases. During this period, we have witnessed the changes in the field of ecological environment in China, ranging from UNCED to Johannesburg WSSD. It is fair to say that the changes have been dramatic and the achievements are splendid. The changes and achievements attribute a lot to the positive efforts made by CCICED. And I would like to express my appreciations and pay my tribute to all the old and new friends in this council.

The waves from the heating debate made at the newly concluded Johannesburg WSSD are still moving. Even though this Summit did not achieve substantive breakthrough in facing the global major environmental issues, in reaching an agreement on recognizing the severe global environmental situation, some progress has been made, particularly on implementing the action plan for the Agenda 21. The Plan of Implementation hammered out by the Summit has set out the targets for action for the next 10 to 20 years.

The action targets and timetable identified by the Plan of Implementation in the field of water, biodiversity, health, agriculture, health and energy, gave full expression that embarking upon the path of sustainable development has become a mainstream on the global level and this trend will not be reversed due to the temporary obstacles. Nevertheless, the heating debates made in the process of preparation for the Summit and during the Summit showed that to achieve sustainable development will be a hard and tortuous process. It has to rely on the effective international cooperation, rely on the actual actions by each government for the shift in the economic increasing mode and actions for implementing the sustainable development. These actions will include the promotion of recycling economy, strengthening the integrated decision making on economy and environment, facilitating the application of environmental economics instrument, as well as the progress made in a wider public participation. All in all, it has to rely on the government, market and various kinds of forces within civil society --- whether they will make a concerted effort in all the fields to proactively push forward sustainable development. The practical actions made by the international community and each government since UNCED in 1992 proved that, without the joint cooperation and support by the government, market and civil society, the tower of sustainable development will not be able to built into a steadfast one.

However, in stressing the cooperation of three forces of government, market and civil society, it does not mean that the public role of government in the field of environmental protection and

sustainable development could be weakened. Since the government possesses huge power ranging from the policy development, rules and regulations formulation, to the budget allocation, it is still decisive to determine the orientation and pace of the sustainable development. In the surge of releasing the government regulation in the advanced market economy countries in the 1980s and 1990s, the government's role in protecting the environment was not weakened. In keeping a leading role of the government's command and regulation regime, more attention has been paid to direct the production and consumption behaviors made by the industry and public with the application of market and economic instruments, and more attention has also been paid to the big role of public participation in environmental protection. For each nation, to facilitate the government and its competent departments to take leading actions, is still the key to advancing sustainable development.

China is witnessing a process of rapid economic development, administrative system restructuring and stepping up the efforts for legislation. And in promoting the government's role in carrying out sustainable development, a very important step is to develop a necessary legal and legislative system. In so doing, it will help urge the government and its competent departments to take into full account of the environmental impact and listen widely to public views and suggestion in developing policies and planning as well as adopting other measures, so as to achieve the integrated decision-making on environment and development, promoting the government policies, planning and other actions and measures to be oriented to the direction of sustainable development.

With 4 years of efforts, the Environmental Impact Assessment Law of PRC enacted newly last October, makes itself a landmark in government's integrated decision-making on environment and development. This law has taken the environmental impact system in China to the new level of strategic environmental assessment. It has integrated all the major planning closely associated with ecological environment into the scope for environmental impact assessment, such as land use, urban construction, the development and construction of the region, river-basin and sea areas, as well as the planning of industry, agriculture, husbandry, forestry, water resources, energy, communications, tourism and natural resources. It has also set out the system and procedures for public participation in the environmental impact assessment and for reviewing and supervision. In that, ranging from the large-scale development planning to the given project construction, the procedure for "assessment first and then construction" should be through. This could be taken as a major progress in the field of environmental protection legislation in China.

For governments and their competent departments, this is a challenge of how to effectively reach an integrated decision-making on environment and development. It requests the governments and their competent departments to readjust the contents of the planning and the approaches and procedures for the planning development, and to set up a more open and democratic approaches and procedures for decision-making. It also requests the governments and their competent departments to gradually develop the new techniques and methods for environmental impact assessment for planning, so as to make itself in a position of being able to make a convincing assessment of the particular environmental impact of a planning, i.e. impact normally on a wide spatial extension, long time span, and overlapping of various behaviors and accumulations. It also

requests the governments and their competent departments to make readjustment to the objectives and contents of the planning based on the conclusion and suggestions from the environmental impact assessment so as to make it much more accommodating to the requirement of environmental protection and sustainable development, and therefore effectively facilitate the planning towards sustainable development.

For environmental protection departments, this is an important opportunity to take part in the state and government at various levels' integrated decision-making on environment and development. It requests the environmental protection departments, based on China's actual situation and the potential scope of impact of various planning, to put forward to the government, the scope, procedures and approaches for going through the environmental impact assessment, and also help the government to review the environmental impact document on planning. It requests the environmental protection departments to give technical guidance and service to the relevant departments in carrying out environmental impact assessment, and also to organize the experts to review and approve the environmental impact assessment report on a planning, to help the public to take part in the environmental impact assessment with a view of effective participation in the decision-making on environmental impact assessment of various planning. As such, it will help facilitate that all the planning will be more in line with the objectives and demands of environmental protection and sustainable development, and make a good check of environmental protection, at the source of planning.

This has constituted a key step in the process of sustainable development. Only if the governments at each level and their competent departments carry out the integrated decision-making on environment and development in an earnest manner, in line with the requirements of the law, urge the development planning of the governments to be oriented towards sustainable development, and eventually set up an integrated strategy and planning body of environment and development, will China be able to rise to all the severe environmental challenges in a forceful manner, and to achieve the promising future of sustainable development.

I wish every success of the First Meeting of the Third Phase of CCICED.

Thank you all.

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