

CONVENTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE IN ACTION

X.J. Zhou

Chinese Academy of Meteorological Sciences, Beijing, P. R. China.

Keywords: Convention, climate change, climate prediction, global warming, greenhouse gas, environment, emission, ecosystem, environmental protection, family planning, human activities.

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Summary

China's environmental and climate problems are part and parcel of the global problems. China is keenly aware of its responsibility and role in the protection of the earth's ecosystem. China pays much attention to protection of environment and climate resources in the course of economic development. The Chinese government has made environmental protection one of the basic state policies and makes unremitting effort towards this end. The Chinese government is determined to implement the Convention on Climate Change. This is not only because China's highest leaders take it seriously, but also because it will help to create a sound environment for sustainable economic development, for deepening reforms and opening to the outside world.

For implementing the Convention on Climate Change, China formulated a series of national action programs covering policies, plans, scientific research, monitoring, and international cooperation.

In 1991, China hosted the Ministerial Conference of Developing Countries on Environment and Development, at which the Beijing Declaration was adopted. After that,

the China Environment and Development International Cooperation Committee was established. It is composed of well-known Chinese and foreign figures who offer advice in these two areas. This gives expression to China's sincerity and resolution in tackling the climate and environment changes issues. This is also a positive contribution that China has made to implementation of the Convention on Climate Change. However, China is a developing country and its economic strength is limited. Like many other developing countries, China regards economic development and protection of environment and climate resources as long-term, arduous tasks that must be addressed. China will further stand ready to implement the policy of reform and opening-up, assimilate and draw on all achievements of human civilization, accelerate the pace of economic growth, and at the same time do a good job on global environmental protection and development.

1. Introduction

In June 1992, United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change was signed at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro. The objective of this Convention is "to achieve stabilization of greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere at a level that would prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system. Such a level should be achieved within a time-frame sufficient to allow ecosystems to adapt naturally to climate change, to ensure that food production is not threatened and to enable economic development to proceed in a sustainable manner".

Chinese Premier Li Peng attended the Conference and signed the Convention on behalf of the government of P. R. China. In an important speech supporting the Convention he said: "Environmental protection and economic development bear on the future of mankind, and affect each country, each nation and indeed each individual. Therefore, solution to those two global issues calls for extensive and effective international cooperation. The Convention on Climate Change will lay a good foundation for an enhanced international cooperation in this area. We in China pay much attention to environmental protection in the course of economic development. We have made environmental protection one of our basic state policies and make unremitting efforts towards this end. We stand ready to undertake international responsibilities and obligations compatible with our development level and to expand international cooperation in global environmental protection and development." On 8 November 1992, the 28th Session of The Standing Committee of the 7th National People's Congress of P. R. China approved the signed Convention on Climate Change. They officially remitted the instruments of ratification of the Convention to the Secretary-General of United Nations on 5 January 1993. Thus, having completed all the necessary legal procedures for the Convention, China was the one of first ten countries in the world to implement the Convention on Climate Change.

Its implementation involves broad areas, including political, social, economic and environmental. For coordinating the work of different governmental departments, social communities and experts, a National Group under the State Council was established in September of 1992. As the office of this group, the Coordinating Division for the Convention on Climate Change was set up in the China Meteorological Administration. In November 1998, following adjustment of the organizational structure of the State

Council, a new National Group for coordination and countermeasure on climate change was formed in the State Developing and Planning Commission. Under the leadership of these organizations in China, a series of activities in the fields of planning, monitoring, research and international cooperation about the Convention on Climate Change have been carried out.

2. Planning

The Chinese government has considered sustainable development to be a strategic cornerstone of the socialist modernization of China and has formulated the plan concerning China's sustainable development. The related ministries have also formulated specific plans for sustainable development in their corresponding aspects. All these plans have ensured in principle the implementation of the Convention on Climate Change in China.

2.1. China's Agenda 21—White Paper on China's Population, Environment and Development in the 21st Century

Corresponding with Agenda 21 of United Nations, the State Planning Commission and the State Science and Technology Commission took the lead in organizing more than 300 experts from 52 appropriate departments and non-government organizations to work together to formulate “China's Agenda 21—White paper on China's Population, Environment and Development in the 21st Century” (hereinafter called “China's Agenda 21”). This was approved by the Chinese government on 25 March 1994, and will function as a guiding document for drawing up medium and long-term plans on economic and social development, expounding China's sustainable development strategies and policies. Its twenty chapters can be divided into four major sections. The first section indicates the overall strategies for sustainable development of society. It determines that the strategic objectives of China's development lie in coordinating economic and social development and environmental resources; it sets out proposed actions for implementation of these objectives, the legislation for sustainable development and its enforcement, the financial resources and mechanisms for implementing the sustainable development strategies and the education and capacity building for sustainable development and public participation. The second section is concerned with population, consumption, social services, eradication of poverty, health and sanitation, development of sustainable human settlements and disaster mitigation. The third section focuses on sustainable development of the economy. It contains economic policies for sustainable development, sustainable agriculture and rural development, sustainable development of industry, transportation and communication and sustainable energy production and consumption. The last section deals with conservation and sustainable use of natural resources, conservation of biodiversity, combating desertification, protection of atmosphere and environmentally sound management of solid wastes. Therefore, China's Agenda 21 clarifies the key problems for realizing sustainable development in China, the objectives for solving these problems and the proposed actions for implementation. Obviously, China's Agenda 21 will function as a guiding document for fulfilling the Convention on Climate Change in China.

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Biographical Sketch

Xiuji Zhou, a Chinese national was born in September 1932, in Jiangsu Province, P. R. China. He is currently Professor and Honorary Director of the Chinese Academy of Meteorological Sciences, Chinese Meteorological Administration. His first degree was from the Department of Physics, Peking University (1952 to 1956). From 1962 he was Sub-Doctor for Mathematical and Physical Sciences of the Soviet Academy of Sciences, USSR.

From 1963 to 1979 he was Associate Professor in the physics of clouds and precipitation, thunderstorm electricity and remote sensing of the atmosphere at the Institute of Atmosphere Physics (IAP), Chinese Academy of Sciences. From 1979 to the present he has been a professor in atmospheric radiation and remote sensing, turbulence and nonlinear dynamics, and mesoscale meteorology at IAP and Chinese Academy of Meteorological Sciences. 1981-1984: Deputy-director of Institute of Atmospheric Physics. 1984-1993: Director of Chinese Academy of Meteorological Sciences (CAMS), Chinese Meteorological Administration. 1993 to present, Honorary Director of Chinese Academy of Meteorological Sciences. 1991 to present, Academician of Chinese Academy of Sciences. 1998 to present, Director of Dept. of Earth Sciences, National Science Foundation of China.

He is a Member of the Environmental Protection Committee of National People's Congress of P. R. China (1993 to present), Vice-president of Chinese Meteorological Society (1990-1998), Vice-president of Chinese Antarctic Academic Society (1987-1994), Member of XIX Executive committee of IAMAP, Member of Radiation Commission of IAMAP and Member of Committee of Atmospheric Sciences of WMO.