

(Translation)

## **Strengthen Environmental Protection and Achieve Sustainable Development**

----- Speech by His Excellency Zeng Peiyan,  
Vice Premier of the State Council of  
the People's Republic of China,  
At the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Governing Council of the  
United Nations Environment Program  
*21 February 2005*

Your Excellency President Kibaki,  
Dr. Toepfer,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,  
Friends,

Good morning. It gives me a great pleasure to come to the beautiful city of Nairobi, the capital of Kenya, and attend the 23<sup>rd</sup> Session of the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the Global Ministerial Environment Forum. I would like to extend, on behalf of the Chinese Government and in my own name, warm congratulations on the convocation of the meeting and forum and best wishes to all the representatives and guests present.

Since human beings made their earliest footprints in East Africa and other parts of the world, our planet has undergone enormous changes. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the issue of development has more than ever become the focus of attention for the human society. Five years ago, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) coming out of the UN Millennium Summit are of far-reaching impact. UNEP, on its part, has played a significant role in global environmental and development affairs over the years. This session of the Governing Council, making development its main theme and poverty eradication, environmental protection and sustainable development as the focus of discussion, will surely play a positive role in realizing the MDGs.

The Chinese Government attaches great importance to the issue of development. Since the adoption of the reform and opening-up policy, China has implemented a three-step strategy in its socialist modernization drive and achieved gratifying results in socio-economic development. China's GDP registered a 9.4% annual growth rate in the past 26 years and reached US\$ 1,650 billion in 2004. Such social undertakings as science and technology, education, culture, public health and poverty alleviation have enjoyed continuous development. The number of poverty-stricken rural population has been reduced notably and the

national average life expectancy at birth has reached 72 years.

China takes sustainable development as a national strategy. By formulating the *Program of Action for Sustainable Development in China in the Early 21<sup>st</sup> Century* and other documents, environmental protection has been incorporated into national development plan and programs. In the past 7 years, China has invested a total of RMB 800 billion yuan in environmental protection. Pollution treatment efforts in major rivers and regions have been strengthened constantly, environmental infrastructure improved remarkably, ecological and environment protection and development projects proceeding smoothly, and the legal framework for environmental protection basically put in place. While the economy grows at a relatively high speed, the escalation of pollution has been generally checked, and improvement is seen in the state of eco-system and environment in some regions of China.

Nevertheless, as a developing country with its per capita GDP barely reaching US\$ 1,200, China still has many difficulties and problems in its socio-economic life. Among them are the large population, low productivity, regional disparity in development, high unemployment pressure, irrational economic structure, underdeveloped social undertakings, high material consumption,

serious pollution, fragile eco-system and high costs in resources and economic growth at the price of resources and environment. China still has a long way to go before achieving industrialization and modernization.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The next period of over ten years is an important time of strategic opportunity for the economic and social progress of China. We will tackle earnestly the challenges and problems on our way forward and concentrate on building a moderately prosperous society in an all-round way, striving to quadruple our 2000 GDP by 2020, namely US\$ 4,000 billion, or US\$ 3,000 in per capita terms, thus bringing about all-round development to our economy and society. In light of the objectives of developing advanced productive forces, promoting advanced culture and safeguarding the fundamental interests of the people, we will adopt a human-centered, well-coordinated and sustainable scientific approach of development, which has the following four features:

- To promote the all-round development of people by giving full play to their talents and creativity while ensuring the social wealth generated by reform and opening-up is shared by the entire people;

- To concentrate on economic development while pushing forward economic, political and cultural undertakings in an all-round way, in order to build a dynamic and harmonious socialist society featuring democracy and rule of law, fairness and justice, trust and fraternity;
- To improve the socialist market economy and achieve balanced development between urban and rural areas, economy and society, man and nature and among different regions while coordinating domestic development and opening-up to the outside world; and
- To enhance the capability for sustainable development by improving the ecological environment and resource utilization efficiency and pursue a civilized development path ensuring economic growth, prosperity and good ecological environment.

In the area of environmental protection, we will give priority to the five following measures:

**1. Promoting clean production and adjusting the economic structure.**

We will carry out auditing and establish a management system for clean production. The environmental assessment regime must be strictly

enforced. Clean production technologies must be applied in every new project. Desulfurizing equipment is required for all coal-fire power plants. We will adjust and optimize our energy sources, improve energy efficiency, promote the use of clean and renewable energy and clean coal technologies. To speed up the transformation of the mode of economic growth, we will further adjust and upgrade traditional industries like metallurgy, construction material, chemical industry, energy, textile and the light industry, quicken the phasing out of out-dated technologies and equipment and close down severely polluting and resource-wasting factories and mines according to law.

## **2. Developing circular economy and building a conservation society.**

We need to increase the awareness of the whole society for conservation and environmental protection and establish a system of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR). We will promote the recycle of resources and vigorously develop the environmental protection industry. Green production and green consumption should be encouraged at all levels, from enterprises and industrial zones to communities, cities and regions. Priority should be given to energy conservation. We will vigorously promote energy conservation in construction, power saving at work and at home,

certification and compulsory labeling systems for energy and water-saving products, and the formulation and implementation of standards for intensive land use.

### **3. Strengthening pollution prevention and treatment and controlling pollutant discharge.**

We will carry on prevention and treatment efforts in key river valleys, regions, cities and sea areas so as to ensure the pollution treatment targets are met on schedule. More sewage and garbage treatment facilities will be built and market mechanism will be introduced. Comprehensive treatment measures will be adopted to control and reduce agricultural non-point source pollution. Attention will be paid to new pollution problems such as tail gas, electronic wastes, noise and soil pollution. A licensing system for pollutant discharge will be widely adopted and enterprises and entities encouraged to reduce pollutant discharge.

### **4. Promoting ecological preservation and improving environmental quality.**

We will continue such ecological projects as returning farmland to forest and pasture to grassland, natural forest preservation, treatment of sand storm sources and water and soil conservation. Ecological protection will be strengthened while improving rural income, agricultural production and rural development. Nature conservation areas and ecological function conservation areas will be

established and improved, where development activities will be controlled and human impact mitigated so as to improve the self-recovering capacity of nature. We will strengthen the survey and observation on the ecological environment and gradually put in place the ecological compensation mechanism.

**5. Protecting the environment according to law and safeguarding the interests of the people.** Focusing on ensuring safe drinking water for the people, we will continue to safeguard people's environmental rights and interests and crackdown on illegal discharge of pollutants according to law. Legal framework will be improved and law enforcement efforts strengthened in the field of environmental protection. We will strengthen the environmental protection mechanism featuring "government guidance, market operation and public participation", establish a scientific evaluation system for environment and development, adopt a standard environment quality notice system and encourage public participation and supervision in the area of environmental protection.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Significant progress has been made in global environmental protection thanks to economic development, scientific progress and greater ability

of mankind to understand and utilize nature for a better life. However, development around the world is lopsided and the global environment still deteriorating. In order to preserve the ecological environment and achieve common development, we must strengthen cooperation in the global context. In this regard, I would like to make four proposals as follows:

**1. To further enhance multilateral and bilateral cooperation.** UNEP should play a greater role in promoting cooperation among countries on environmental protection and coordinating global environmental management. Regional environmental problems should be addressed through enhanced cooperation between relevant countries and regions. Developed countries should take a more proactive approach in meeting their responsibilities and render more assistance to developing countries for environmental protection. Developing countries, on their part, should enhance their capabilities for sustainable development, give more attention to protecting their own environment and participate in the international cooperation.

**2. To advance economic, technical and management cooperation in an all-round way.** Efforts should be made to enhance economic and technical cooperation, remove trade barriers, open domestic markets and help developing countries to

improve level of development. It is imperative to establish an environmental safety mechanism in the field of trade to prevent cross-border transfer of heavily polluting industries, hazardous wastes and organic pollutants hard to degrade. It is necessary to remove barriers to technology transfer, disseminate environmental treatment technology, share experience in economic development and environmental management and adopt development strategies and policy measures favorable to environmental protection.

**3. To conduct cooperation in the implementation of the MDGs.** Countries should further identify the direction and priority of the economic and social development. International exchanges and cooperation should be enhanced and concrete and effective measures taken to promote poverty eradication, basic education, gender equality and prevention and treatment of major diseases, so as to realize the Millennium Development Goals.

**4. To actively explore new areas of cooperation.** Extensive exchanges and cooperation should be conducted in areas of infrastructure, technology dissemination, human resources development, information sharing and policy making, so as to jointly enhance the capacity for environmental protection. The tsunami in the Indian Ocean reminded us once again that natural

disasters are a common threat to mankind and it is hence imperative to enhance cooperation in natural disaster early warning system, as well as disaster prevention and relief system around the globe. To this end, the Chinese Government is ready to increase its assistance to the disaster area. In addition to the RMB 500 million of assistance to the disaster-stricken countries through bilateral channels, China has earmarked US\$ 20 million for multilateral assistance, including US\$ 500,000 provided through UNEP, so as to support a greater role of UNEP in the post-disaster reconstruction.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Strengthening environmental protection and achieving sustainable development is a common aspiration of all people and a common responsibility of all governments around the world. The Chinese Government will earnestly implement its basic state policy of environmental protection, actively participate, as always, in the international environmental affairs, carry out international environment conventions and make its contribution to resolving the environmental and development issues facing mankind. Let us take further actions, sincerely enhance exchange and cooperation and work for the harmonious development of man and nature and for a better world and better future.

Thank you.