

China

China's Environment

LIU JUNHUI & WANG JIA
TRANSLATED BY QIN DAN

CHINA
INTERCONTINENTAL
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Foreword

Through its reform and opening to the outside world, China has worked an economic miracle and boosted its comprehensive strength, enhancing its standing in the international community. As more and more people around the world are eager to know and understand China, we have compiled the China Series, aiming to provide a shortcut for readers to get the basic facts about this country.

The 12 titles in this series cover China's geography, history, politics, economy, culture, law, diplomacy, national defense, and society, as well as its science, technology and education; its environment; and its ethnic groups and religions. These writings will help readers acquire a basic knowledge of China.

It is our hope that this series will enable readers to get a general idea about China:

Chinese history, culture and civilization, which is the oldest continuous major civilization in the world;

China's basic conditions—the world's largest developing country with a huge population, a country that is developing unevenly on a poor economic base; in light of these conditions, China is following its own path to sustainable development while learning from other civilizations; and

China's future—led by the Chinese Communist Party, the Chinese people are focusing their efforts on economic development and carrying on reform and opening-up; they are building a harmonious society in their own country and working for a harmonious world with lasting peace and common prosperity.

We expect that through these books our readers will begin a new journey of discovery—understanding China.

January 2010

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Preface

Nowadays, environmental problem has become one of the most severe problems confronted by human beings, which can not be avoided wherever you are. Protect the earth as well as our sharing living space has been the consensus of the whole human society. Since the 20th century, human beings have created unprecedented material civilization by virtue of the advance of science and technology and the largely increase of social productive forces. But at the same time, resources, environment pollution, ecological damage and other problems are becoming increasingly outstanding, which are threatening the survival and development of human beings. People have realized that, we must change the consciousness of “challenging the nature” and the traditional development mode “polluting first and treating later,” and try to seek a sustainable development road in which people, economy, society, environment and resource coordinate with each other.

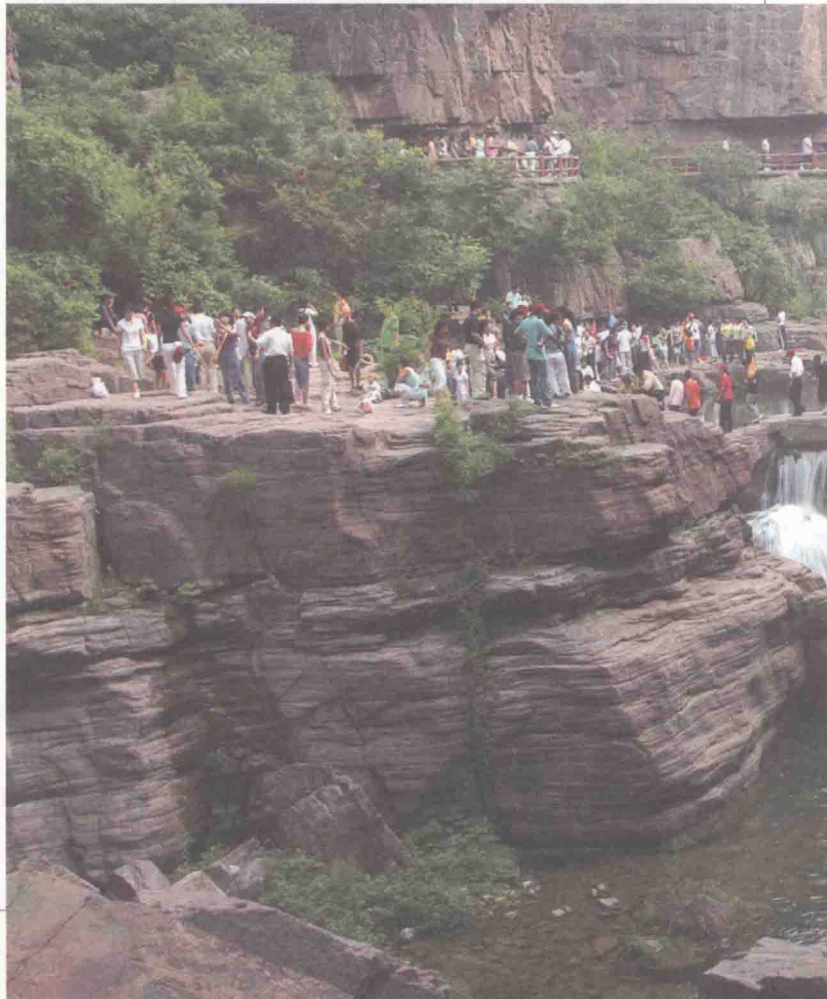
As the developing country with the largest population in the world, China has a vast expanse of territory and complex natural conditions such as climate and topography. Since late 1970s, Chinese economy has been developing continuously and fast, and environment and resources have gradually become the important problems confronted by China. Meanwhile, China's unique population problem and natural conditions push China to the severe challenge of environmental protection.

At present, China is in the stage of accelerated development of industrialization and urbanization, a period in which the conflict between economic growth and environmental

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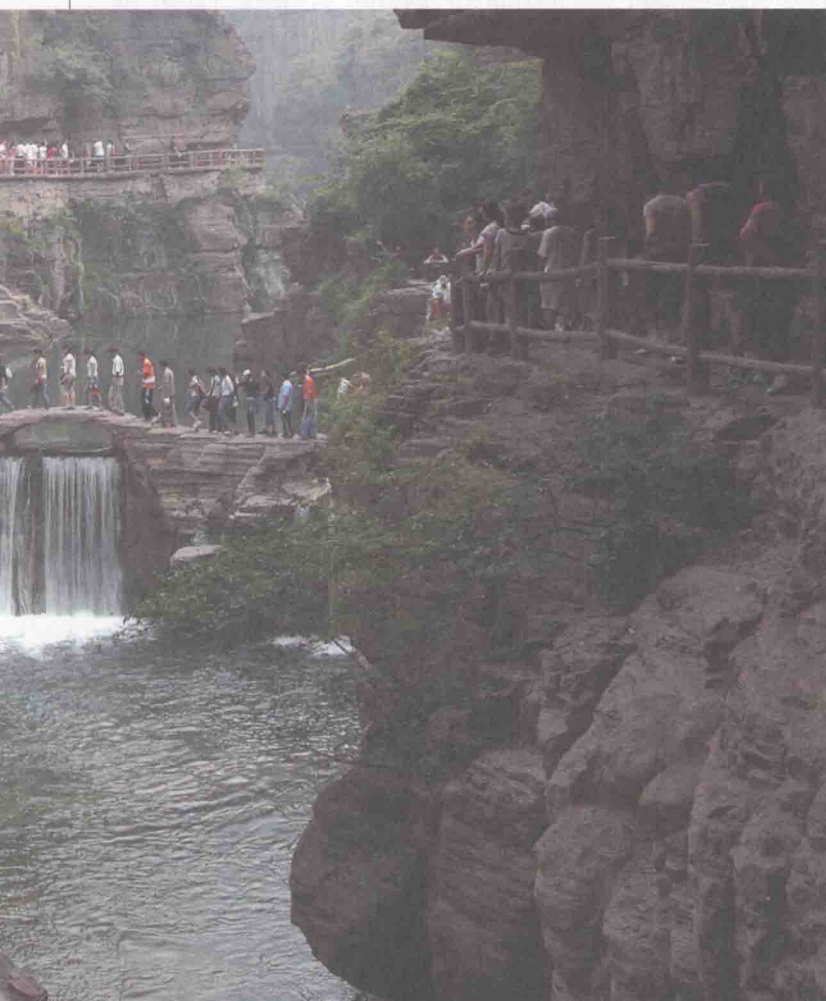
protection is quite salient. From 1980s, a series of ecological deterioration phenomena, such as water and soil erosion, grassland degradation, desertification, disappearance of biological diversity and so on, appears due to the growth of population, over exploitation and use, techno, environment pollution and ecological deterioration are serious in some ranges of China: the emissions of major pollutants surpass the environmental carrying capacity; pollutions such as water, land, and soil are severe; solid waste, vehicle exhaust, and persistent organic pollutants are increasing. This trend

Yuntai Mountain in Xiuwu County, Henan Province, belongs to the first batch of World Geological Park in the world, and the picture indicates that people are enjoying the ecological tourism here.



is transferring from cities to countries and from the east to the west. The above is affected not only by economic activities and population pressure, but also by climate change and greenhouse effect all over the world.

Early in 1972, China has sent a delegation to the first Conference on the Human Environment held by UN in Stockholm, Sweden, and realized the importance of environmental protection. As a large responsible developing country, China has always been attaching great importance on environmental protection and construction, and established



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it as one basic state policy after the reform and opening-up in 1978. Through a series of important strategic measures, China strengthens environmental protection and construction, curbs the deterioration of the environment and protects the earth together with governments and people from other countries. In present global context, the environment and development problems in any country and region will become problems for all human beings. Solve the environment problems in China not only conform to the development goals of China, but also greatly embody the common benefits of all human beings.

It is inspiring to see that, through the great efforts of Chinese government and people for decades, ecological systems of fresh water, forest, grassland, wetland, farmland, and ocean are largely improved, biological diversity is effectively protected, and the existence situation of many rare wild animals and plants and endangered species are greatly improved too. The aggravated trend of environment pollution and ecological damage has slowed down in China, pollution disposal in some river basins has achieved initial success, environment quality in some cities and regions are improved, pollution emission strength of industrial products are reduced, and the environmental protection consciousness of the whole society are further strengthened.

China continuously returns cultivated land to forest and plants trees in a large scale, and greatly increases forest carbon sinks (the capacity of forest to absorb and store carbon dioxide). Now, China has become the country with the fastest growth of forest resource and largest area of artificial afforestation in the world, and the area of artificial afforestation reaches to about 1/3 of that in the world. Only from 2003 to 2008, the forest area in China has a net increase of 20.54 million hectares.

In recent years, China pays more attention to environment

treatment and ecological restoration during resource exploitation, adopts a series of measures to protect and improve human living environment, takes urban and rural environment improvement as an important content of environment protection, and focuses to solve the pollutions that seriously harm the health of people. China pays the most attention on energy-saving and emission-reduction in recent years. Up to the first half year of 2009, the unit GDP energy consumption of China reduces by 13% compared with 2005, which equals to emission reduction of 8,000 million tons carbon dioxide. This is the contribution of China to the global environmental protection career.

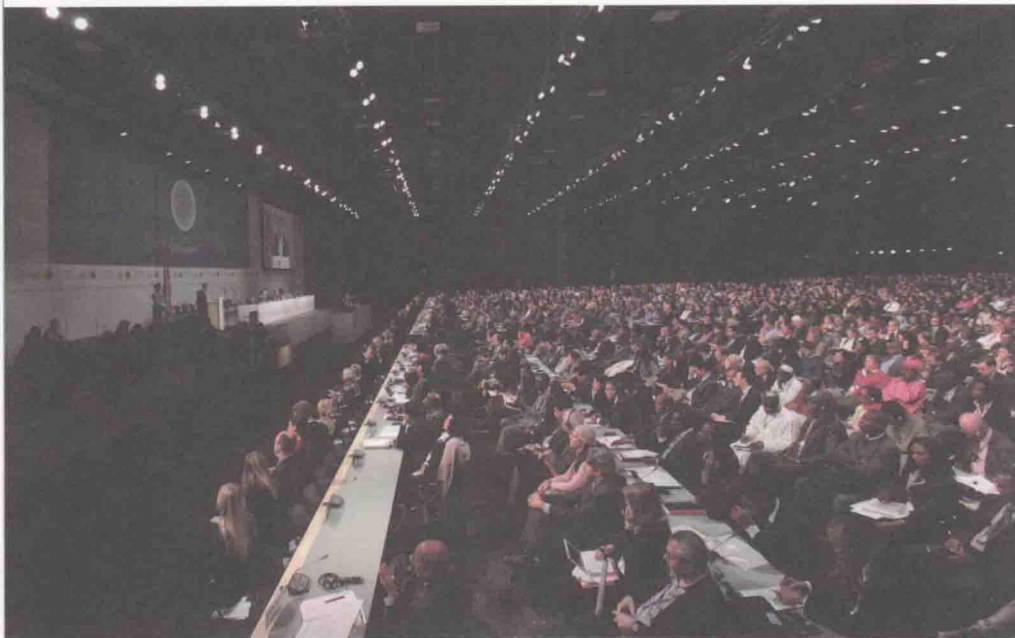
China is also the country with the fastest growth speed of new energies and renewable energy sources. On the basis of ecological protection, China develops hydroelectric power in an orderly manner, actively develops nuclear power, and supports and encourages rural areas, outlying areas and areas with proper conditions to greatly develop new renewable energy resources such as biomass energy, solar energy, terrestrial heat, wind energy, etc. China's installed capacity of hydroelectric power, under construction scale of nuclear power, heat accumulation area of solar water heater, and solar energy power generating capacity rank the first in the world.

Through a series of environment laws and concrete implementation measures, China promotes environmental protection by laws and achieves remarkable results. China is a developing country who made and implemented China's National Climate Change Program in the earliest time. China also formulated and revised Law on the Conservation of Energy Resources, Circular Economy Promotion Law, Law on Renewable Energy, Law on the Promotion of Clean Production, Forestry Law, Grassland Law etc, and takes them as the important methods to cope with environment and climate changes.

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Since 2005, Chinese government has demonstrated clearly that, the scientific concept of development should command the whole development of economy and society, implementing the basic national policy of saving resources and protecting environment, to develop recycling economy, protect ecological environment, speed up the construction of an energy-efficient and environment-friendly society, and improve the harmonious development of man and nature. This spirit is fully showed in the "11th Five Year Plan Outline for Economic and Social Development of the People's Republic of China." In 2007, the 17th Session of the General Assembly of CPC put forward a new and higher requirement of developing China on the basis of the target of comprehensively constructing an affluent society, and the important content of this requirement included as follows: constructing the ecological civilization; basically forming the industrial structure, growth pattern and consumption mode of saving resources and protecting the environment; the recycling economy shall form a fairly large scale; the proportion of renewable energy sources shall increase evidently; the emission of main pollutants shall be controlled effectively; the ecological environment quality shall be improved remarkably; the concept of ecological culture shall be established stoutly in the whole society. In one word, this requirement further strengthened such governance ideas as "people oriented" and "harmonious coexistence between human beings and nature."

China quickens its step in realizing "three changes": first, to change from economic growth focus and environmental protection neglecting to the balance of both; second, to change from environmental protection lagging behind economic growth to the both developing hand in hand; third, to change from protecting environment by administrative ways mainly to solving environment problems by the integration



of laws, economic, technical and necessary administrative methods. China sticks to saving, safe, and clean development and thus realizes sustainable development. This means that, China is setting up a new social view of development and a new production and living mode on the premise and basis of extensive and thorough social involvement. At present, the environmental consciousness is generally improved in the whole society of China, and the scope and depth of the public participating in environmental protection are constantly increasing. Environmental NGO (a non-governmental organization) has been an important force to popularize environmental education and advocate the public to take part in environmental protection.

Protect the environment better means to win tomorrow. In late 2009, United Nations Climate Change Conference

On Dec. 7, 2009, UN Climate Change Conference was opened in Copenhagen, capital of Denmark.

lasting 12 days in Copenhagen captured the attention of the world. Despite of all differences, the megatrend of protecting the earth by people together will never be changed. In this conference, Chinese government restated its own goals that the unit GDP carbon dioxide emission would be reduced by 40%–45% compared with 2005. This is a solemn commitment. Confronting various difficulties, Chinese people are confident to win the challenges ahead.

The Development of Environmental Protection Cause in China



The environmental protection cause in China starts from the beginning of 1970s. Through nearly 40 years' development, China has gradually formulated and improved the environmental protection policy system with Chinese characteristics so as to prevent the rapid deterioration of national environment condition and form perfect environment management system and environment law system to greatly develop environment protection by laws. At present, China takes resources saving as a basic state policy, develops recycling economy, protects ecological environment, and speeds up the construction of an energy-efficient and environment-friendly society. From the very beginning, the environmental protection cause of China has kept a close relationship with the international environmental protection cause, and has always been developing the international cooperation of environmental protection actively.

China's Environmental Protection Road

From 1950s to 1970s, environment pollution problems were being noticed in some developed countries. People

► Data Link

The Minamata Disease Incident of Japan

Minamata is a small fishing village located at east side of Minamata Bay, Kumamoto, Japan. In 1925, Chisso Corporation built a factory here, which used mercurous catalysts and discharged the waste water to Minamata Bay. In 1956, a weird disease was found in Minamata. The light degree patients were inarticulate, tottered in movement, and had hindrance in consciousness, with deformed hands and feet; the serious degree patients became unsound in mind and died at last. The later researches indicated that this disease was caused by the much mercury included in the waste water discharged by Chisso Corporation. Minamata Disease endangered the health and family happiness of the local people seriously. Up to 2006, 2,265 people in total had been diagnosed to get Minamata Disease, and most of them died of this disease.

began to know the harm of environment pollution by events such as "the dense fog in London" and minamata disease in Japan. At that time, China was still underdeveloped in economy, but Chinese leaders and some awake people had been aware of the importance of environment problems.

In early December of 1970, Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai particularly asked for information from a journalist who reported Japanese environment pollution when he received guests from Japan, and invited the journalist to introduce environmental protection problems to Chinese scientific, technical, and administrative personnel. At that time, environmental protection was a fresh concept to China, and many Chinese considered environmental protection as cleaning, garbage disposal and similar issues.

In 1972, the first United Nations Conference on Human Environment was held in Stockholm, Sweden. Although China was going through a really rough time, the government still sent a 40-member delegation to attend this conference. Undoubtedly, this conference was a significant environmental enlightenment for the Chinese. People realized that, environmental protection was not an incidental and separate phenomenon, but a global issue directly related to the development of economy and society.

Under the personal supervision of Premier Zhou Enlai, China's first environmental protection conference was held in Beijing in August, 1973, which meant a tough start of Chinese environmental protection cause. This conference definitely held the view that China also had serious environment problems. Subsequently, each region organized to solve a series of environment problems to which people reacted strongly, including water pollution treatment such as Guanting reservoir in Beijing, Baiyangdian in Heibei, Lijiang River in Guilin, as well as air pollution treatment in cities such as Shenyang and Taiyuan.